

Moses in Corinth

The Apologetic Context
of 2 Corinthians 3

Paul B. Duff

SUPPLEMENTS TO NOVUM TESTAMENTUM 159

BRILL

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Supplements to Novum Testamentum

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The Apologetic Context of 2 Corinthians 3

By

Paul B. Duff



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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Duff, Paul Brooks, 1952–

Moses in Corinth : the apologetic context of 2 Corinthians 3 / by Paul B. Duff.

pages cm. — (Supplements to Novum Testamentum, ISSN 0167-9732 ; Volume 159)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-90-04-28843-0 (hardback : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-90-04-28945-1 (e-book)

1. Bible. Corinthians, 2nd, III—Criticism, interpretation, etc. 2. Moses (Biblical leader)—Biblical teaching. I. Title.

BS2675.52.D84 2015

227'.306—dc23

2014046609

This publication has been typeset in the multilingual “Brill” typeface. With over 5,100 characters covering Latin, IPA, Greek, and Cyrillic, this typeface is especially suitable for use in the humanities.
For more information, please see brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 0167-9732

ISBN 978-90-04-28843-0 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-28945-1 (e-book)

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This book is printed on acid-free paper.

For Sally



Contents

Acknowledgments	xi
Abbreviations and Citations	xii

1 Introduction: The Problematic Nature of 2 Corinthians	3	1
Introduction	1	
The Apologetic Context of 2 Cor 2:14–7:4	2	
Paul's Use of Exod 34:29–35	3	
The Integrity of 2 Corinthians	6	
Paul's Opponents	9	
The Present Study	13	
 2 The Question of the Integrity of 2 Corinthians	 18	
Introduction	18	
The Beginning of the Debate: Johann Salomo Semler	18	
From Semler to the Present	20	
<i>An Intermediate Visit (Zwischenbesuch), a Lost Letter (Zwischenbrief),</i> <i>and an Unaccounted for Event (Zwischenfall)</i>	21	
<i>The Problematic Nature of 2 Cor 6:14–7:1</i>	22	
<i>The Independence of Chapters 10–13 and the Question of</i> <i>Chronology</i>	26	
<i>The Collection Chapters (Chapters 8 and 9)</i>	29	
<i>The Separation of 2:14–7:4 from 1:1–2:13 and 7:5–16</i>	32	
Verbal Links between 2 Cor 7:4 and 7:5–16	34	
The Discontinuity between 2 Cor 2:13 and 2:14 Can Be Explained	38	
The Contrast in Tone between 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 and 2 Cor 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16 is Exaggerated	41	
No Manuscript or Patristic Evidence Supports the Separation of 2:14–7:4 from Its Surrounding Context	44	
Conclusion	45	
Current Hypotheses about the Division of 2 Corinthians	46	
Critique of the Various Hypotheses	48	
Conclusion	51	

3 The Origins of Paul's First Apology	52
Introduction	52
Who Were Paul's Detractors? Some Notable Attempts to Identify Paul's Opposition	52
Are There References to the "False Apostles" in 2 Cor 2:14–7:4?	60
2 Cor 5:12	61
2 Cor 2:17	62
2 Cor 3:1	64
Internal Opposition? 1 Corinthians: Its Cause and Likely Effect	65
Evidence for Issues of Concern in 2:14–7:4 That Likely Had Their Origin in 1 Corinthians	69
<i>Questions about Paul's "Fitness"</i>	69
<i>Allegations of Self-Commendation</i>	72
Issues of Concern in 2:14–7:4 That Seem Unrelated to 1 Corinthians	76
<i>Accusations of Furtive and Cunning Behavior</i>	76
<i>Charges of Fraud</i>	78
The Collection Prior to 2 Cor 2:14–7:4	81
Paul's Weakness	85
Summary	91
4 "Who is Fit for These Things?" (2 Cor 2:14–3:6)	93
Introduction	93
Paul, a Participant in God's Triumphal Procession	93
Paul's Fitness (ἱκανότης) and That of Moses	98
Concerns about Paul's Honesty: Letters of Recommendation	102
<i>Types of Letters: Letters of Introduction</i>	103
<i>Types of Letters: Letters of Commission or Authorization</i>	104
<i>Types of Letters: Intercessory Letters</i>	106
Letters of Recommendation and the Corinthian Community	110
<i>Excursus: The Connection between the Issues of Self-Commendation and Letters of Recommendation</i>	113
"You Are Our Letter"	115
Paul's "Letter" and the Metaphor of the Cultic Procession	117
The Letter of Christ and the Torah	120
<i>Paul's Use of Scripture</i>	121
<i>Scriptural Allusions in 2 Cor 3:3</i>	123
The Torah and Paul's "Letter" of Recommendation	131
An Envoy (Διόκονος) of a New Covenant	132
Summary and Conclusion	135

5 The Ministries of Condemnation and Righteousness

(2 Cor 3:7–11) 137

Introduction 137

The Ministries of Paul and Moses: Comparison or Contrast in

2 Cor 3:7–11? 137

The Logic of an Argument *a minore ad maius* 139

Comparison and Contrast within 3:7–11? 141

The Expansions of Paul's Comparative Argument:

2 Cor 3:7b and 3:10 144

The "Glory" of Moses in Other Jewish Texts 147*Contrasts within the Comparative Sentences of*

2 Cor 3:7–11 150

Δόξα in the Ministry of Death? 151

A Possible Solution 153

Jewish Views about Gentiles and the Torah 155*Gentiles and the Torah in Paul's Other Writings* 159*The Connection between God's Glory and Judgment/Punishment* 162

Summary and Conclusion 170

6 Not Like Moses? (2 Cor 3:12–18) 172

Introduction 172

Moses the Veiled Envoy: 2 Cor 3:12–13 173

"Moses" (the Text) and Israel: 2 Cor 3:14–15 180

Israel and Her Clouded Thinking 181*"Those Who Are Perishing": 2 Cor 4:3–4* 187*Israel and "Those Who Are Perishing": 2 Cor 3:14–15 and 4:3–4* 191

Moses the Paradigmatic Believer: 2 Cor 3:16–18 193

Turning to the Κύριος 194*"The Lord is the Spirit"* 198*Vision and Transformation* 200

Summary: Believing is Seeing 208

7 Reading Paul Reading Moses 210

Bibliography 215

Index of Authors 224

Index of Passages Cited 227

Index of Subjects 236

Acknowledgments

There are many people to whom I owe a debt of gratitude for assisting me with this project. My colleagues in the Department of Religion at The George Washington University, particularly Robert Eisen, Alf Hildebeitel, Dewey Wallace, and the late Harry Yeide, provided advice and encouragement. I am likewise grateful to my former colleagues in the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Office (where I had the pleasure to serve for seven years) for their support. I am thankful to the office of the Vice-President for Research for providing a summer grant for this project. Others who read parts of this work in earlier incarnations, who asked helpful questions, or who shared their expertise or ideas with me include (but are not limited to) William Campbell, Andrew Das, Elizabeth Fisher, David Hellholm, Natalie Houghtby-Haddon, G. Anthony Keddie, Katherine Keller, Steven Kraftchick, Peter Lampe, Troy Martin, Margaret Mitchell, Mark Nanos, Christopher Rollston, Heather Schell, Heidi Wendt, and Mike Zito. Allison Taylor-Adams and Diana Willis assisted me in various ways. I am particularly grateful to Margaret Mitchell and David Moessner, the editors of the *Novum Testamentum Supplements*, for including my work in their series and to Mattie Kuiper at Brill for cheerfully answering my many questions. Of course, I could not have completed this book without the encouragement of my family. Thanks especially to my wife, Ann, who has always encouraged me. I am also grateful to my children and their spouses for their encouragement, affection, and good cheer. This book is dedicated to our daughter Sally in honor of her recent completion of the Bachelor of Arts Degree in Religion and Philosophy.

Abbreviations and Citations

Titles and abbreviations of biblical texts, early Christian, Jewish, and classical sources follow the standards laid out in the *SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*, ed. Patrick H. Alexander et al. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999).

When translating New Testament texts, I have, whenever possible, followed the NRSV. I have, however, emended it where I have seen fit. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha come from James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983). Translations of classical sources, unless otherwise noted, are from the Loeb Classical Library. All of the translations of the Septuagint (LXX) are my own.

Introduction: The Problematic Nature of 2 Corinthians 3

Introduction

Within 2 Corinthians 3, Paul explicitly and enigmatically refers to Moses, the lawgiver of old, by alluding to Exod 34:29–35, an odd passage that describes the glorified appearance of Moses when he descended from Mount Sinai. Particularly troubling for any interpreter of 2 Corinthians is the context in which Paul's reference to Moses appears. In the larger passage in which the Moses text appears—2 Cor 2:14–7:4, a section of the letter focused on Paul's ministry—the apostle's intent is clearly apologetic: he defends his ministry. However, in the section that refers to Moses (particularly 3:7–18), it is difficult to discern how the argument supports the apostle's defense. Furthermore, Paul's use of the Exodus text raises another significant question for interpreters: why would Paul refer to Moses here (as well as Israel and the Torah) in a letter written to a *gentile* community in which there seems to be no evidence of Judaizing?

Unfortunately, understanding Paul's reasons for alluding to Exodus 34 in this part of 2 Corinthians is complicated by two additional problems, each of which has beleaguered generations of scholars. The first has to do with the integrity of canonical 2 Corinthians. Due to the presence of a number of odd breaks and inconsistencies, it is not clear the canonical letter represents a unified epistle. Rather, it is possible that it is made up of two or more letters that were at some point in time edited together. A second problem concerns Paul's opposition. Who did the apostle find himself up against? Were his opponents members of the Corinthian assembly? Or were they external agitators who arrived in Corinth after Paul left? If the latter, can the references to Moses be explained by appealing to an alternative theology brought by them, as has been suggested by some scholars? In the following pages, we will briefly examine these various problems as well as some of the solutions that have been proposed.

The Apologetic Context of 2 Cor 2:14–7:4

Despite the controversy over the integrity of 2 Corinthians as a whole, there is virtually no debate over the claim that 2:14–7:4 represents a discrete section within the canonical letter. As already noted, this section—whether an independent letter or a single component of one or more longer letters—focuses on Paul’s ministry. For reasons that we will discuss in more detail in the chapters that follow, when Paul wrote this piece of the canonical letter (2:14–7:4), he seems to have found himself in the position of having to defend his physical appearance, his legitimacy, and his integrity as an “envoy” (διάκονος) of the deity.¹

Paul defends his physical appearance in various places throughout 2:14–7:4. Apparently, the Corinthians could not understand how an envoy of the deity could present such a poor physical presence or, perhaps more importantly, why he should endure the kinds of physical and mental torments that Paul apparently suffered. In 2 Cor 4:8–9, for example, the apostle describes himself as one “afflicted” (θλιβόμενοι), “persecuted” (διωκόμενοι), struck down (καταβαλλόμενοι), and even at times verging on despair (ἀπορούμενοι).² Such a description clearly represents the way that some in the community viewed him. Paul counters each of the elements in the description with what he claims is the proper perception of him: he is “not crushed” (οὐ στενοχωρούμενοι), “not driven to despair” (οὐκ ἐξαπορούμενοι), “not forsaken” (οὐκ ἐγκαταλειπόμενοι), and not destroyed (οὐκ ἀπολλύμενοι).

Concerning his legitimacy as a διάκονος (“envoy”) of the deity, Paul vehemently insists early on in 2:14–7:4 that he is “fit” (ἱκανός, 2:16; 3:5) for his job and, indeed, it is God who is responsible for his fitness (ἱκανότης, 3:5–6). Elsewhere in the section, Paul emphasizes his commissioning by the deity (ὡς ἐκ θεοῦ, 2:17b; ἔχοντες τὴν διακονίαν ταύτην καθὼς ἡλεήθημεν, 4:1) and in one place he goes so far as to claim the role of ambassador for Christ (ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ οὖν πρεσβεύομεν), through whom the deity appeals: “Be reconciled to God!” (καταλλάγητε τῷ θεῷ, 5:20).

Besides his physical presence and his fitness for his role, Paul’s integrity also appears to be an issue of concern. For example, toward the beginning the section (2:17), Paul insists upon his honesty, claiming that he is not, like many

1 For the notion of a διάκονος as an envoy, see Dieter Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 28–29 and John N. Collins, *Diakonia: Re-Interpreting the Ancient Sources* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), *passim*.

2 Despite the fact that Paul uses the plural here, it is clear that he is talking about others’ perception of *him*. Cf. also 2 Cor 6:4–10.

others, “peddling” the deity’s message. Later on, in 4:2, the apostle insists that he neither acts deceitfully nor falsifies God’s word. In the hardship catalogue of 6:3–10, there are hints suggesting that some have found fault with Paul’s ministry (6:3) and that they have interpreted his suffering as divine punishment (6:9). Finally, toward the very end of the section, in 7:2, Paul denies that he has “defrauded” anyone.

But, as indicated above, all of this defensive language seems alien to the section focused on Moses (3:7–18). The glorification of the lawmaker’s appearance, followed by Paul’s discussion of the reaction of both Moses and Israel to that glorification, seems out of place. In what way does Paul’s appeal to Moses, Torah, and Israel—and, in particular, his focus on Exod 34:29–35—make sense in the context of his apologetic endeavor? Why would Paul have pointed to such an unusual scriptural text to defend himself?

Paul’s Use of Exod 34:29–35

The original scriptural passage that Paul alludes to in 2 Corinthians 3 (i.e., Exod 34:29–35) tells of Moses’ descent from Mount Sinai with the Torah. This was the second time that the lawmaker had come down the mountain with the Torah; immediately after his first descent, he had encountered the Israelites worshipping a golden calf. Enraged at their idolatrous behavior, he threw down the tablets and smashed them (32:19). Thereafter, he ascended the mountain a second time, received the commandments from the deity, and again descended the mountain, although this time his face was “glorified.”

²⁹ . . . When he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the appearance of the skin on his face (ἡ ὄψις τοῦ χρώματος τοῦ προσώπου) had been glorified (δεδόξασται) at the time that he spoke with [God].

³⁰ Now, Aaron and all the elders of Israel saw Moses and the fact that the appearance of the skin on his face had been glorified and they were afraid to come near him. ³¹ But Moses called to them and then Aaron and all the leaders of the assembly turned to him and Moses spoke with them.

³² And afterwards, all the Israelites came to him and he commanded them everything that the Lord commanded him on Mount Sinai. ³³ And, when he finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. ³⁴ But, when Moses entered before the Lord to speak with him [in the Tent of Meeting], he took off the veil until he left. And when he left, he told all the Israelites those things that the Lord commanded him. ³⁵ And the Israelites saw the face of Moses, that it had been glorified. And Moses placed a veil on his

face until he [again] would enter [the Tent of Meeting] to speak with him (Exod 34:29b-35).

In the course of his argument in 2 Cor 3:7–18, Paul alludes to this text not once but twice. The first allusion appears in 3:7–11 and the second in 3:12–18. In each section, Paul focuses on something different in the Exodus text.

In Paul's first allusion to the Exodus narrative, the apostle emphasizes the brilliance of the δόξα ("glory") of Moses' countenance. Then by means of an argument *a minore ad maius* ("from the lesser to the greater"), he juxtaposes the δόξα of Moses' ministry over against that of his own:

7 Now if the ministry of death, chiselled in letters on stone tablets, came into being in glory (ἐγενήθη ἐν δόξῃ) so that the people of Israel could not gaze at Moses' face because of the glory of his face, a glory now rendered ineffective,⁸ how much more will the ministry of the Spirit come in glory?⁹ For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, much more does the ministry of justification abound in glory!¹⁰ Indeed, what once had glory has lost its glory because of the greater glory;¹¹ for if what was rendered ineffective was through glory (διὰ δόξης), much more is the permanent in glory (ἐν δόξῃ)!¹³

It seems clear from these sentences that Paul intends here first, to make the claim that God's glory permeated Moses' ministry and, second, to indicate that the glory was intense—so much so that the Israelites could not look at Moses. But, paradoxically, Paul at the same time labels Moses' glorious ministry "a ministry of death" and a "ministry of condemnation." This gives rise to the question, is Paul's intent here to extol the ministry of Moses or to denigrate it?

In 3:12–18, the section immediately following, Paul again points to the Exodus passage but here his motivation seems both different and more complex. In this section, he introduces an element that he had not previously mentioned from the Exodus narrative: the veil that Moses placed on his face. While allusions to Moses' veil redound throughout the second section, they seem to serve different purposes in the various places. For example, near the beginning of the section, in 3:12b–13, Paul makes the claim:

3 For the meaning of "came into being" for ἐγενήθη, see C.K. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, HNTC (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 109 and Margaret E. Thrall, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, ICC (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 237.

¹²... we act with great boldness, ¹³ not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of what was being rendered ineffective.

Paul's focus in these verses centers no longer on Moses' *ministry* as it did in the previous section. Instead, the apostle here draws a direct contrast between his own personal behavior and the actions of Moses.

Paul's allusions to Moses, and in particular to his veil, continue in the verses that immediately follow (3:14b–15) where he makes the claim that the effects of that veil are still apparent in his own time. Just as the perception of the wilderness generation was affected by the veil, so too, Paul insists:

¹⁴... to this very day, when [Israel hears] the reading of the old covenant, that same veil remains, since only in Christ is it set aside. ¹⁵ Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds.

Here, Paul raises yet another subject, the alleged misreading of the Mosaic text (i.e., the Torah) by the Jews of his own time.

Paul continues to allude to the veil of Moses in the next verse (3:16) where he points to Exod 34:34 and the removal of the veil "when [Moses] entered before the Lord to speak with him." Finally, in the concluding verse of the section, Paul once again alludes to the veil, although in this case, his concern is to point to the "unveiled" experience of believers (3:18). What does any of this—the veiled face of Moses, the Jewish misreading of the Torah, the removal of Moses' veil, or the unveiled perception of believers—have to do with Paul's personal appearance, his legitimacy, or his integrity? On the surface, there seems to be little to tie the Moses material with Paul's self-defense.

The struggle to make sense of these verses in the larger context of the letter has given rise to inordinate speculation about their origins. Typically, Paul's appeal to the lawgiver has been seen as a counter to the claims of Paul's opponents in one way or another.⁴ However, before we consider the question of Paul's opposition, we need to look briefly at some of the more popular

4 There have been exceptions. C.F.D. Moule proposed that 2 Cor 3:7–18 was originally a synagogue sermon previously delivered by the apostle (*The Birth of the New Testament*, 3rd. ed [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981], 70, n. 1). Moule's suggestion has been cautiously supported by Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, WBC (Waco: Word, 1986), 59. Thrall proposed that the section was written in response to criticism directed against Paul not by rival apostles but by members of the Corinthian synagogue (*Second Epistle*, 296–97). See also Jan Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999), 62.

hypotheses concerning the original shape of canonical 2 Corinthians. Any decision about Paul's opponents will obviously be influenced by the number, shape, and chronology of the documents from which the evidence is drawn.

The Integrity of 2 Corinthians

While there is little doubt that the apostle Paul authored canonical 2 Corinthians (with the possible exception of 2 Cor 6:14–7:1), nevertheless, as any reader knows, anyone attempting to make his or her way through the canonical document has to put up with significant shifts in subject matter and tone, not to mention odd repetitions, perplexing travel references (regarding both that of Paul and his co-worker, Titus), and confusion over the number of opponents Paul faced as well as the issues of contention.

One of the most famous examples of a sudden shift in subject matter, particularly relevant for our purposes, appears in Paul's narrative about his search for his co-worker Titus, beginning in 2:12–13,

¹² When I came to Troas to proclaim the good news of Christ, a door was opened for me in the Lord; ¹³ but my mind could not rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said farewell to them and went on to Macedonia.

This narrative is then interrupted by a long defense of Paul's role as an envoy of the deity, beginning in 2:14–16,

¹⁴ But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the scent of the knowledge about him in every place, ¹⁵ for we are the fragrance of Christ in God's service among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; ¹⁶ to the one a scent from death to death, to the other a scent from life to life. Who is fit for these things?⁵

Paul's defense lasts for over four chapters, almost one-third of canonical 2 Corinthians. Then, unexpectedly, in 7:5–7, Paul resumes his narrative about his search for his co-worker Titus:

⁵ For a discussion of the translation issues in this passage and the translation choices made, see below, Chapter 4.

⁵ For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted in every way—disputes without and fears within.⁶ But God, who consoles the downcast, consoled us by the arrival of Titus,⁷ and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was consoled about you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more.

Remarkably, in 2 Cor 7:5, Paul continues his narrative about the search for Titus as if no interruption had taken place.

While the break that occurs between 2:14 and 7:5 gives perhaps the best example of a sudden shift in subject matter, the transition between chapters 9 and 10 provides us with an even more significant change in tone. In the earlier chapter, Paul expresses great confidence in the Corinthian community's ability and willingness to complete a collection of money destined for the church in Jerusalem. Among other things, in chapter 9, he tells the Corinthians, "... I know your eagerness, which is the subject of my boasting about you to the people of Macedonia" (9:2). Based upon the apostle's confidence in the community, he urges them to contribute as generously as possible to the collection and he then assures them that their openhandedness will not be in vain:

¹¹ You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us;¹² for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God.

As these two passages from chapter 9 illustrate, Paul's confidence in the community seems unmistakable.

Immediately following this chapter, however, the apostle begins to address the community in an unexpected aggressive manner:

^{10:1} ... I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold towards you when I am away!—² I ask that when I am present I need not show boldness by daring to oppose those who think we are acting according to human standards. ...⁷ If you are confident that you belong to Christ, remind yourself of this, that just as you belong to Christ, so also do we.⁸ Now, even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for tearing you down, I will not be ashamed of it.⁹ I do not want to seem as though I am trying to frighten you with my letters.¹⁰ For he says, 'His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.'¹¹ Let such a

person understand that what we say by letter when absent, we will also do when present.

Gone in 2 Corinthians 10 (as well as in the chapters that follow it) is Paul's confidence in the community. Also missing is the friendly tone that appeared just a few verses earlier.⁶

Besides changes in subject matter and tone, the canonical letter also contains an odd repetition. As we have already seen, Paul in chapter 9 appeals to the Corinthians to give generously to the collection for Jerusalem. However, in the chapter immediately preceding (2 Corinthians 8), Paul had made virtually the same appeal. Both chapters focus on the same collection for Jerusalem and both encourage the Corinthians to give generously. Curiously, though, despite the repetitiveness, these chapters also contain a puzzling contradiction. In chapter 9, Paul seems to indicate that the collection had been completed (9:2) whereas chapter 8 demonstrates that such is clearly not the case. In that earlier chapter, Paul specifically asks the community to finish the work that it had already begun (8:10–11).

Discussions about travel in 2 Corinthians present the reader with still more problems. In 12:21 and 13:1, Paul mentions his *third*, upcoming visit. In 1:15–23, however, he seems to explain (in a rather defensive manner) why a particular visit (perhaps the third?) never occurred. Titus' travel raises even more problems. In 8:16–24, Paul announces that he is sending Titus to Corinth (presumably as the carrier of the letter) along with an otherwise unknown "brother." But, 12:18 suggests that Titus and the brother had already been to Corinth. Furthermore, 2:12–13 and 7:6–15 seem to indicate that Titus met Paul in Macedonia after the former had left the city.

Obviously, all of the above-mentioned problems have given rise to questions about the integrity of the canonical letter. Unfortunately, although the integrity of the text has been intensely debated for almost two and a half centuries, it has yielded little by way of consensus. Although some contemporary scholars insist that 2 Corinthians represents a single letter, many have concluded that the canonical letter must be made up of more than one letter or letter fragments. While we will look at the arguments focused on the letter's integrity in some detail in the next chapter, for now it is sufficient to list the most significant options regarding the number and extent of the original letters. There are currently three hypotheses that command the most support.

The first holds that 2 Corinthians is composed of two letters, one currently appearing in chapters 1–9 and the other in chapters 10–13. Most scholars who

6 Cf. Paul's particularly hostile tone in 2 Cor 11:4, 7–10, 19–21; 12:11–13, 16–18; and 13:2.

support this hypothesis argue that chapters 1–9 represents a letter written prior to chapters 10–13. A few, however, argue for the chronological priority of chapters 10–13. A second hypothesis closely resembles the first. It postulates that canonical 2 Corinthians is made up of three letters written in the following order:

- 1) chapters 1–8,
- 2) chapter 9, and
- 3) chapters 10–13.

The third hypothesis is a bit more complicated than the other two. It postulates that 2 Corinthians is composed of five letters and a fragment (possibly non-Pauline). These texts, it is usually assumed, were composed in the following order:

- 1) 2:14–7:4 (excluding 6:14–7:1),
- 2) chapters 10–13,
- 3) 1:1–2:13 and 7:5–16,
- 4) chapter 8 and
- 5) chapter 9.

According to this hypothesis, the first two letters are apologies, the third is a letter of reconciliation and the last two are letters encouraging contributions to a collection of money for the Jerusalem church. The collection letters are typically assumed to be roughly contemporaneous to one another but addressed to different locations; 2 Corinthians 8 was written to Corinth but 2 Corinthians 9 was sent as a circular letter to the other Achaian churches. Finally, 6:14–7:1 is usually assumed to be a fragment of a document, later inserted into its present location in the text. However, there is no consensus about when the text was composed or why. Nor is there consensus on its pedigree. Some believe that it is part of an earlier Pauline letter but others assume it to be non-Pauline or even anti-Pauline.

Paul's Opponents

The question of the identity of the opponents that Paul faced when he composed 2 Corinthians and, in particular, the opponents that he addressed in the section containing the allusions to Exod 34:29–35, further complicates the current study. Although there is no doubt that Paul encountered stiff opposition

in Corinth and that such opposition played an important role in the creation of the body of literature comprising canonical 2 Corinthians, it is not evident who made up that opposition; different parts of the canonical letter seem to presume different opponents.

In some places in 2 Corinthians, the opposition appears to have come from outside the community. For example, Paul refers to “super-apostles” in two places within the last four chapters of the canonical letter (chapters 10–13). These “super-apostles,” it seems, had come into Corinth from elsewhere.⁷ Paul first mentions these figures in chapter 11:

⁴ ... if someone comes and proclaims [to you] another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you submit to it readily enough. ⁵ I think that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. ⁶ I may be untrained in speech, but not in knowledge; certainly in every way and in all things we have made this evident to you (11:4–6).

In the chapter that follows, at the end of the apostle’s so-called fool’s speech, Paul again mentions these “super-apostles”:

I have been a fool! You forced me to it. Indeed you should have been the ones commending me, for I am not at all inferior to these super-apostles, even though I am nothing (12:11).

These are the only passages that refer explicitly to “super-apostles.” However, a few verses after the first reference to them (cited above, 11:4–6), Paul speaks of “false apostles”:

¹² And what I do I will also continue to do, in order to deny an opportunity to those who want an opportunity to be recognized as our equals in what they boast about. ¹³ For such boasters are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ So it is not strange if his ministers also disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness. Their end will match their deeds (11:12–15).

⁷ The assumption that they were outsiders comes primarily from the phrase, “if someone comes . . .” in 11:4. See, for example, Georgi, *Opponents*, 272.

While most scholars assume that the “super apostles” and the “false apostles” represent one and the same group, some have questioned that identification.⁸

Regardless, a few verses later, Paul again seems to refer to “apostolic” rivals:

²¹ . . . But whatever anyone dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. ²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. ²³ Are they ministers of Christ? I am talking like a madman—I am a better one . . . (11:21b–23a).

If we assume, for the sake of argument, that the “false apostles” and the “super apostles” refer to the same group, then we can draw two conclusions about them. First, the fact that Paul refers to them as “apostles” (11:5; 11:13; and 12:11) and “ministers of Christ” (11:23) suggests that they, like Paul, preached the “good news” of Christ in some form or another (cf., 11:4). Second, since Paul identifies these figures as “Hebrews,” “Israelites,” and “descendants of Abraham” (11:22), it is also evident that these “ministers of Christ,” like Paul himself, were Jewish. These rivals are usually assumed to have entered Corinth after the problems mentioned in 1 Corinthians had been resolved. Furthermore, they are typically assigned a significant role in the creation of the crisis underlying 2 Corinthians.

But 2 Corinthians not only gives evidence of apostolic outsiders who had lately come into the community. Some passages also suggest that Paul faced *internal* adversaries and one individual in particular. In 2:5–10, for example, the apostle mentions a single antagonist from within the Corinthian community:

⁵ But if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but to some extent—not to exaggerate it—to all of you. ⁶ This punishment by the majority is enough for such a person; ⁷ so now instead you should forgive and console him, so that he may not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. ⁸ So I urge you to reaffirm your love for him. ⁹ I wrote for this reason: to test you and to know whether you are obedient in everything. ¹⁰ Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ.

This same adversary is the subject of 7:12–13a, there labeled “the wrongdoer” (ὁ ἀδικήσας):

8 See, for example, Ernst Käsemann who has suggested that the “super-apostles” refer to the Jerusalem apostles while the “false apostles” points to Paul’s opposition within Corinth (“Die Legitimität des Apostels: Eine Untersuchung zu 2 Korinther 10–13,” *ZNW* 41 [1942]: 20–24).

So although I wrote to you, it was not on account of the wrongdoer, nor on account of the one who was wronged, but in order that your zeal for us might be made known to you before God. In this we find comfort.

This particular person, apparently someone from within the community, had offended Paul and then later had repented of the offense.⁹ It is possible and perhaps even likely that this person was not only Paul's opponent but, as we will later see, was also responsible for leading a group within the community that opposed the apostle. Unfortunately, without more information, it is difficult to say much about this person's identity. In the past, interpreters identified "the wrongdoer" with the man accused of committing incest in 1 Corinthians 5. While this interpretation goes back at least as far as Tertullian, it seems unlikely, as most scholars currently acknowledge.¹⁰ Regardless of the precise identification of this person, however, there is no good evidence for a connection between this opponent and the "super apostles."¹¹

All of this information leads to the question of the identity of the opposition that Paul had in mind when he composed 2:14–7:4, that portion of canonical 2 Corinthians that contains the Moses allusions (3:7–18). If we can determine against whom Paul was reacting and for what reason when 2:14–7:4 was written (whether that section represents an individual letter or part of a longer epistle), then we can perhaps better understand the enigmatic references to the lawgiver in 2 Corinthians 3. Was Paul defending himself against the outsider "super apostles" when he alluded to Exod 34:29–35? Or was he instead defending himself against *internal* opponents?¹²

9 It is important to note that everyone who sees within canonical 2 Corinthians a collection of letters (whether two, three, or five letters) reckons the two above-cited passages (2:6–10 and 7:12–13a) as being part of the same letter.

10 For a helpful discussion, see Thrall, *Second Corinthians*, 61–65.

11 We will return to this in the next chapter.

12 Unfortunately, the answer to questions about the identity of Paul's opponents is at least partially dependent on how one divides the canonical letter. For example, if one assumes that 2 Corinthians 3 makes up a part of a letter now found in chapters 1–9 or even 1–8, then it might seem more likely that Paul defended himself against internal opponents when he wrote chapter 3 (since the references to the internal opponent in chapters 2 and 7 would be in the same letter as the Moses allusions). If, on the other hand, one were to subscribe to the five-letter hypothesis, then 2:14–7:4 would be considered an early letter written at a time closer to the letter now contained in chapters 10–13 than to the letter containing the passages focused on the internal opponent in chapters 2 and 7. Consequently, one might assume that the "super-apostles" represent Paul's opposition. The letter containing the

The Present Study

In light of the difficulties that the allusions to Moses present to the interpreter (not to mention the additional complications arising from questions about the integrity of the canonical letter and the identity of Paul's opposition), it will come as no surprise to learn that 2 Corinthians 3 has been labeled "the Mt. Everest of biblical texts."¹³ For the most part, this label is fitting, as anyone who has studied 2 Corinthians 3 will quickly admit. It should be noted, however, that in one particular way, the label is inappropriate: Mt. Everest has been conquered (indeed, many times!) while this text remains an enigma. I suggest that our failure to understand 2 Corinthians 3 has resulted in part from two problematic assumptions. The first is the assumption that the "super-apostles" mentioned in 2 Corinthians 10–13 had something to do with Paul's introduction of Moses into this text. The second assumption is that Paul, in 2 Corinthians 3, is in some way arguing against Torah observance.

It is the thesis of the present work that Paul's allusions to Moses in 2 Corinthians 3 can be explained as an important piece of Paul's earliest apologetic response to the Corinthians, a response found in 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 (excluding 6:14–7:1). This *apologia*, I contend, was composed to counter suspicions about Paul that arose *within* the community. These suspicions emerged as a result of two related phenomena: the apostle's poor physical presence on the one hand and his attempt to collect money for the Jerusalem church on the other. Some in the community challenged Paul's legitimacy as a true *διάκονος* ("envoy") of the deity. They saw Paul not as a representative of God but rather as a charlatan whose continual suffering resulted from the deity's vengeance, a vengeance arising from God's anger at one who would defraud his community.

In the course of this work, I will attempt to show that there is an internal logic to the section in which we find the Moses allusions and that these allusions make sense within the context of Paul's larger apologetic argument. I contend that Paul's argument in 2 Corinthians 3 is, as it stands, both coherent and powerful. Ultimately, I will argue that 2 Corinthians 3 (including 3:7–18) has to do with texts, both conventional and unconventional, and more precisely, with the interpretation of these texts.¹⁴ In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul implicitly challenges

passages mentioning the wrongdoer within the community could be assumed to belong to a letter written later than chapters 10–13.

13 Anthony T. Hanson, "The Midrash in 11 Corinthians 3: A Reconsideration," *JSN7* 1980 (1980): 19.

14 As we will see, Paul defines texts more broadly than most. For example, just as "Moses" represented a text for the apostle (in the guise of the Torah), so too (based upon his

the Corinthians' ability to read and correctly interpret the "text" that is written on his heart. That "text," as he makes clear in 3:2–3, is his letter of recommendation and that letter is in fact the transformed community itself. By appealing to the notion of the community as his letter of recommendation, Paul insists that the Corinthians' own transformation into a community of believers is the only proof of his apostolic legitimacy that they should need or want.

Moses enters the apostle's argument early on, even before Paul's allusion to Exodus in 3:7. An allusion to the lawgiver appears in the apostle's discussion of his own *ἱκανότης* ("fitness") in 2:14–3:6. Lying beneath the *ἱκανός/ἱκανότης/ἱκανώ* language of this section lay Moses' claim in Exod 4:10, that he himself was not *ἱκανός* ("fit") for his divine commission. Paul concludes this particular line of argumentation by insisting that it was the deity who, as in the case of Moses, made him fit (*ἱκάνωσεν*) for his role (3:6). More to the point, Paul brings the lawgiver into his argument by alluding to the textual product of Moses' ministry, the Torah. In 3:3, Paul makes the implicit claim that his heart-written text is superior even to that ancient, revered text, inscribed on stone by the finger of God.

Having juxtaposed the textual product of Moses' ministry (i.e., the Torah) to that of his own (the heart-written "text" that is the Corinthian community), Paul then points to Exod 34:29–35 in order to compare the divine *δόξα* ("glory") of his *διακονία* ("ministry") to that of Moses (3:7–11). The apostle's strategy here is to emphasize the degree of glory that attended Moses' *διακονία*—a *διακονία* in which God's *δόξα* was so great that the Israelites could not bear to look at the lawgiver's face (3:7)—and, at the same time, to nevertheless claim the superiority of his own ministry. While Paul contends that both ministries manifested the *δόξα* of the deity, he insists that his superior *διακονία* of Spirit brought life to the (gentile) Corinthians while also implying Moses' *διακονία* of letter brought condemnation and death to them.

In 3:12–18, Paul introduces the idea of Moses' veil, again alluding to Exod 34:29–35. In this section, the veil of Moses serves a number of different purposes. First, Paul uses it to juxtapose his own openness (*παρηρησία*) to Moses' act of veiling his face before Israel (3:12–13). Then, he implicitly juxtaposes the "veiled" reading of "Moses" practiced by Israel of Paul's own generation over against the unveiled faces of the Corinthians, allowing the latter group, at least theoretically, to perceive "the glory of the Lord" unhindered. In 3:16, Paul points to the removal of Moses' veil—whenever he would "turn to the Lord" (in an allusion to Exod 34:34)—as the exemplar of the gentile Corinthian commu-

reading of Jeremiah 38:31–33 [LXX]) the Corinthian community also comprised a text inscribed on his own heart (2 Cor 3:2–3).

nity's conversion. In the verse that follows (3:17), the apostle equates the "Lord" to whom Moses had turned in the Tent of Meeting to the Spirit experienced by the Corinthians in the ἐκκλήσια. In this way, he affirms the lawgiver as a paradigm for the gentile Corinthians.

In the final verse of the section, Paul explicitly points to the unveiled faces of the Corinthians and claims that they, like Moses, experience "the glory of the Lord" with unobstructed perception. But whereas Moses experienced God's glory on Sinai and in the Tent of Meeting, the Corinthians experience it in their own community. Indeed, the Corinthians' unveiled faces allow them to recognize their own transformation. Here, Paul returns to an idea originally introduced in 3:2–3 where he had pointed to the transformation of the community as evidence of his legitimacy.

Paul concludes 3:18 with the claim that the unveiled faces of the transformed community have resulted "from the Lord, the Spirit." With this assertion, he once again brings his ministry back into the picture for, of course, it was his διακονία that had introduced the Spirit to the Corinthians. Paul's allusion to the transformation of the community by the agency of the Spirit at the end of 3:18 recalls his earlier point that the Corinthian community as Christ's letter, written by the Spirit, was made possible by his ministry (3:3). Indeed, he claims in that earlier passage that the letter of Christ was διακονηθεῖσα ὑφ' ἡμῶν ("ministered by us").¹⁵

Particularly important for Paul's argument in the final section of the chapter (3:12–18) is the juxtaposition of veiled Israel and the unveiled Corinthians. From the apostle's perspective, this contrast serves to warn the Corinthians against acting like the people of Israel (i.e., the Jews of his own day) whose perception of their text, "Moses" (i.e., the Torah), Paul insists, was obstructed by the lawgiver's own veil.¹⁶ In other words, in this section, the apostle challenges the community with the implicit question: is their perception of his

15 Paul's allusion to the community's ability to view "the glory of the Lord" with unveiled faces in the final verse does not only point backwards. It also points forward to the chapter that follows. There Paul will insist that the dying and rising of Jesus is manifest in his own battered body (4:7–12). The clear implication is that, if the community can recognize God's saving power at work in their own transformation, then they certainly should be able to recognize the dying and rising of Jesus in Paul's own body. In other words, they should be able to recognize that the apostle's suffering represents a vital dimension of his gospel proclamation rather than the vengeance of an angry deity directed at a charlatan attempting to defraud the community.

16 Paul's claim about Israel's imperfect perception applied not only to the wilderness generation; he argues that Israel of his own time read Moses (i.e., the text) with a veil.

own heart-written text—that is to say, the community’s own transformation—also veiled?¹⁷

As I will show, Paul’s rhetoric in this section (2 Corinthians 3) does not disparage the Torah and, with the exception of 3:13, the apostle speaks only positively of Moses. Indeed, both Moses and the Torah function as positive examples in his argument. It should also be noted that Paul does not make the claim here (either implicitly or explicitly) that Israel has been replaced by the ἐκκλησία. Although Israel functions for Paul as a negative model in 2 Corinthians 3 (as she does in 1 Cor 10:1–11), the apostle in no way intended to demonstrate that the deity’s “new covenant” with the gentiles was meant to take the place of God’s original covenant with Israel.¹⁸ Ultimately, Paul’s argument focuses on the gentile Corinthians, not on Israel. Read from this perspective, the negative labels that the apostle applies to Moses’ ministry (“the ministry of death” and “the ministry of condemnation”) are concerned not with Israel’s condemnation but rather with the negative effects of Moses’ ministry on the gentiles—specifically the Corinthian gentiles—prior to their conversion.

Overall, the current work is organized into six chapters. The chapter that immediately follows, chapter 2, surveys the various opinions regarding the integrity of canonical 2 Corinthians and argues for a particular division of the canonical letter. Most significantly for this study, it argues that 2:14–7:4 (minus 6:14–7:1) originally stood as an independent apology. Chapter 3 addresses the issue of Paul’s opposition and also examines the underlying reasons for the composition of 2:14–7:4: Paul’s poor physical presence, his competence, and his trustworthiness. Behind all of these lay concerns about the collection for the Jerusalem church.

Chapters 4 through 6 focus on Paul’s apologetic argument in 2 Corinthians 3. Chapter 4 centers on 2:14–3:6. It begins with the apologetic function of the processional metaphors in the early verses of the letter, discusses the “fitness” language (ἱκανός, ἱκανότης, ἱκανόω) that appears throughout the section, and considers the role that letters of recommendation played in the controversy. Chapter 5 takes up the challenge of making sense of 3:7–11, the first section that alludes to Exod 34:29–35. It focuses on the function of the type of argument that Paul employs in this section (*a minore ad maius*). It also addresses the reason for the derogatory labels (“the ministry of death” and “the ministry of condemnation”) that the apostle applies to Moses’ ministry in these

17 In the chapter that follows, specifically in 4:3–4, the apostle even suggests the possibility that “the god of this age” (i.e., Satan) has obstructed the perception of his detractors (4:3–4).

18 I infer from Rom 11 that Paul believed Israel’s perceptual difficulties to be temporary.

verses. Chapter 6 centers on 2 Cor 3:12–18 and the three incarnations of Moses that appear there: Moses the somewhat flawed δῖάκονος (3:13), Moses the text (3:14–15), and Moses the paradigm for gentile believers (3:16–18). It also examines the role of veiled Israel in Paul's argument. The final chapter summarizes the whole of Paul's argument from the beginning of the letter (2:14) through the end of chapter 3.

The Question of the Integrity of 2 Corinthians

Introduction

While the letter that we know as 2 Corinthians contains valuable information about Paul's self-understanding, his theology, and the ongoing and sometimes stormy relationship with the church that he had founded at Corinth, our comprehension and appreciation of it is significantly encumbered by the question of the integrity of the document. Consequently, before attempting to describe the historical situation that gave rise to Paul's use of the figure of Moses in 2 Corinthians 3, it is imperative that we determine more precisely the context of Paul's argument. To begin with, what were the original boundaries of the letter that contains the passage dealing with Moses? Was the larger section in which the Moses passage appears (2:14–7:4) originally an independent letter? If so, where would it chronologically fit in the Corinthian correspondence? Or, was 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 part of a larger letter? If so, what was the extent of that letter in the canonical document? When was it written in relation to the other correspondence?

Since the various components of the Corinthian correspondence are all interrelated, in the pages that follow we will examine issues that may seem, at least on the surface, to have little to do with our immediate topic. But, as we will see, some of the issues (e.g., the independence of chapters 8 and 9) are much more relevant to this study than they initially appear. Of course, the topics that are obviously most germane to our analysis of 2 Corinthians 3 and its larger context (i.e., 2:14–7:4) will be discussed extensively. For example, we will give a great deal of attention to the question of the independence of 2:14–7:4 toward the latter part of this chapter. Prior to that, however, we will survey the various opinions on the integrity of 2 Corinthians, focusing on five key claims that shaped the discussion from the time of Johann Salomo Semler to the present.

The Beginning of the Debate: Johann Salomo Semler

The controversy over the integrity of 2 Corinthians began well over two centuries ago, during the time of the Enlightenment. Concern in particular over the difficulties surrounding chapters 8 and 9 caught the attention of a

number of scholars in the early and middle part of the eighteenth century. It was not, however, until the latter part of that century that the suggestion that more than one letter constitutes canonical 2 Corinthians actually appeared in print.¹

In 1776, Semler, a professor at Halle University, published a commentary on 2 Corinthians that made the then remarkable claim that the canonical letter was actually composed of parts of three separate letters.² Semler was particularly troubled by the problems of reckoning chapters 8 and 9 as part of the same document. He conjectured, as a result, that these chapters must have originally belonged to separate letters. In addition, Semler claimed that Paul's praise for the community in 7:6–16 could neither be reconciled with his discourse in 10:1–13:10 nor could that latter passage be harmonized with the apostle's appeals for money in chapters 8 and 9.

Ultimately, Semler suggested that the earliest letter in 2 Corinthians was made up of the first eight chapters of canonical 2 Corinthians plus its last three verses (13:11–13).³ 2 Corinthians 9, Semler concluded, represented a second letter, originally one of a number of such letters sent out to various small cities in Achaia.⁴ Finally, the last four chapters, chapters 10–13 (minus the epistolary conclusion in 13:11–13), comprised the third letter.⁵ The significance of Semler's proposal can hardly be overstated. Curiously, however, the particular division of the canonical letter that he proposed was ignored to a large extent in the century that followed. But, in the twentieth century, as we will see, his suggestion was again taken up.⁶

1 As Hans Dieter Betz points out, a number of earlier scholars likely had a profound influence on Johann Semler, although the latter was the first to make the suggestion in print (*2 Corinthians 8 and 9: A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle Paul*, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985], 4–10).

2 Johann Solomo Semler, *Paraphrasis II. Epistolae Ad Corinthios* (Halle: Hemmerde, 1776). Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain a copy of Semler's work to examine. As a result, I have based my summary on the work of Hans Dieter Betz (*2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 10–12) and Margaret Thrall (*Second Epistle*, 3–4).

3 It should be noted that Semler also believed Romans 16 to be part of this letter. He hypothesized that it followed 2 Corinthians 1–8 and preceded the conclusion of 13:11–13.

4 Semler, *Paraphrasis II*, 238, n. 264.

5 Semler, *Paraphrasis II*, 310, n. 350.

6 It was not until 1924, when Hans Windisch produced his commentary on 2 Corinthians (*Der zweite Korintherbrief*, Reprint of the 9th ed. [1924], KEK 6 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970]) that something like Semler's reconstruction reappeared. Windisch treated chapters 1–7 as one letter (although he had some doubts about the unity of that section), chapters 10–13 as another letter and chapters 8 and 9 as parts of two different letters. In

From Semler to the Present

Following Semler, various proposals emerged concerning both the number of letters embedded in canonical 2 Corinthians and the order in which they were composed. In this section, I will briefly trace the history of research from 1776 until the present time. While I will make no attempt to be comprehensive in this overview (since others—in particular Hans Dieter Betz and Margaret Thrall—have already provided thorough historical surveys of the scholarly debate), I will instead highlight five influential proposals made in the centuries following Semler.⁷ These are as follows.

- 1) The claim for a *Zwischenbesuch* (“intermediate visit”), *Zwischenbrief* (“intermediate [lost] letter”), and *Zwischenfall* (“intermediate event”);
- 2) the proposal that 2 Cor 6:14–7:1 is an interpolation;
- 3) the suggestion that chapters 10–13 represents an independent letter;⁸
- 4) the claim that chapters 8 and 9 should be separated from each other and possibly the rest of the canonical letter as well, and
- 5) the proposal that 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 represents an independent letter.

Each of these claims significantly affected the debate about the original shape of the Corinthian correspondence. It would, however, be fair to say that some of them were not entirely new when they were put forth by the scholars mentioned below. Sometimes they were rediscoveries of previously made proposals that had since been forgotten (or ignored) and at other times they represented variations on earlier claims.⁹ In the pages that follow, we will examine each of these five claims in turn. We will begin each of the following sections with a description of the relevant hypothesis. We will then follow the evolution of

recent years, Semler's suggestion has been promoted by Thrall in her important commentary on 2 Corinthians (*Second Epistle*) and by Michel Quesnel (“Circonstances de Composition de la Seconde Épître Aux Corinthiens,” *NTS* 43 [1997]: 256–67).

7 For a more recent (but less comprehensive) survey, see Ivar Vegge, *2 Corinthians—A Letter About Reconciliation*, WUNT² 239 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 7–22.

8 While the independence of chapters 10–13 had originally been claimed by Semler, this suggestion re-emerged in a somewhat different form in the nineteenth century, as we will see.

9 Sometimes such a rediscovery stimulated debate in the scholarly community in a way that the original had not. For instance, of those findings to be discussed below, Bleek's “discovery” of an earlier, second visit to Corinth had already been noted by many, as Bleek himself acknowledged. In addition, both Hausrath's hypothesis that chapters 10–13 represented a separate letter and H. Hagge's (and J. H. A. Michelesen's) suggestion that chapters 8 and 9 could not be part of the same letter had already been proposed by Semler (see pp. 29–30, n. 40).

the proposal—including variations and counter-arguments—up to the present time.

*An Intermediate Visit (Zwischenbesuch), a Lost Letter
(Zwischenbrief), and an Unaccounted for Event (Zwischenfall)*

Close to a half-century after Semler, Friedrich Bleek, a professor at the then newly established University of Bonn, published an article on the Corinthian correspondence that would significantly influence subsequent studies. Although Bleek did not question the integrity of 2 Corinthians, he nevertheless made two important suggestions: 1) that Paul made an intermediate visit (*Zwischenbesuch*) to Corinth between the time that he had founded the community and the time that he had written 1 Corinthians and 2) that Paul authored another letter between 1 and 2 Corinthians (*Zwischenbrief*).

While others before him had suggested an intermediate visit, as he himself freely admitted, Bleek argued that the proposal had not received the attention that it deserved.¹⁰ As a result, he felt the need to make an argument supporting an intermediate visit. He recognized that both 12:21 (“I fear that when I come again, my God may humble me before you . . .”) and 13:1 (“This is the third time I am coming to you”) indicate that a second visit must have taken place between the time that Paul had founded the community and the time that he had composed 2 Corinthians. He proposed that the visit most likely took place before the apostle wrote 1 Corinthians.¹¹

Bleek also concluded that Paul had sent a letter to Corinth between 1 and 2 Corinthians (the so-called painful letter referred to in 2 Cor 2:3–4 and 7:8–12) for, unlike most scholars of his time, he did not think that these references to an earlier letter pointed to 1 Corinthians.¹² Bleek arrived at this conclusion based on the roles played by Paul’s co-workers Timothy and Titus. From 1 Cor 4:17 and 16:10–11, Bleek concluded that Timothy was in Corinth at or shortly after the time that 1 Corinthians was delivered to the community. Timothy, he speculated, then returned to Paul in Ephesus and informed him that the community had not expelled the person accused of incest as the apostle had instructed them (1 Cor 5:1–5). In response, the apostle sent Titus to Corinth with the painful letter. Upon Titus’s return, the apostle learned about the Corinthian reception of that letter (2 Cor 7:6ff).

10 Friedrich Bleek, “Erörterungen in Beziehung auf die Briefe Pauli an die Korinther,” *TSK* 3 (1830): 615–16.

11 Bleek, “Erörterungen,” 614–24.

12 Bleek, “Erörterungen,” 625–32.

Based upon this chronology, Bleek argued that 1 Corinthians could not be identified with the painful letter for, if they were one and the same document, then *Timothy*, not Titus, would have given Paul the news about the community's reception of it. Furthermore, Paul's anxiety over Titus's news about the community's repentance (related in 2:12–13; 7:5–6) could not be explained. The only way to make sense of such would be to postulate another letter, the so-called intermediate letter (*Zwischenbrief*), sent to Corinth after 1 Corinthians and before 2 Corinthians.¹³

A quarter-century after Bleek's article, Heinrich Georg August Ewald took up Bleek's idea of an intermediate visit. Ewald likewise concluded that a visit must have taken place between Paul's original founding of the community and the composition of 2 Corinthians. But whereas Bleek had suggested that the second visit took place *before* Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, Ewald proposed that it had happened *between* the writing of 1 and 2 Corinthians.¹⁴ He further insisted that the so-called intermediate letter had been written by the apostle in response to an attack on Paul (*Zwischenfall*) that happened during the intermediate visit.¹⁵

Both Bleek and Ewald's contributions to the study of the Corinthian correspondence had enduring significance. Currently, most scholars reject the identification of the painful letter (cf. 2 Cor 2:3–4 and 7:8–12) with 1 Corinthians. Likewise, many agree that both an intermediate visit took place and that some kind of painful episode happened during that visit. While some still accept the proposal of a lost painful letter (*Zwischenbrief*), others have instead claimed that this letter is actually part of canonical 2 Corinthians, currently occupying chapters 10–13 of that document.

The Problematic Nature of 2 Cor 6:14–7:1

Another important issue emerged early in the nineteenth century when Christian August Gottfried Emmerling focused his attention on 2 Cor 6:14–7:4. In his commentary on 2 Corinthians, Emmerling pointed out that these particular verses fit poorly in their place in the canonical letter because they both interrupt Paul's train of thought and seem incompatible with what the apostle says elsewhere in 2 Corinthians.¹⁶

13 Bleek, "Erörterungen," 625–32; idem, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. William Urwick (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1869), 432–34.

14 Howard Georg August Ewald, *Die Sendschreiben des Apostels Paulus* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1857), 225–26.

15 Ewald, *Sendschreiben*, 226–27.

16 Christian August Gottfried Emmerling, *Epistola Pauli Ad Corinthios Posterior Graece Perpetuo Commentario Illustravit* (Leipzig: Barth, 1823), 78.

The reasoning behind Emmerling's suggestion was sound. The six verses in question (6:14–7:1) separate two related imperatives that Paul directs at the Corinthians. At the end of 6:13, Paul commands the Corinthians: *πλατύνθητε καὶ ἡμᾶς* (“open up for us”). He then begins 7:2 with a similar imperative: *χωρήσατε ἡμᾶς* (“make way for us”). The inclusion of 6:14–7:1 between the imperatives weakens their force considerably and, as a result, the separation of these commands by it is difficult to explain. Furthermore, as Emmerling also noted, the content of 6:14–7:1 seems at odds with larger section's context. The opening command (“Do not be mismatched (*ἐτεροζυγοῦντες*) with unbelievers . . .”) makes this evident. This admonition followed by various examples and scriptural allusions clearly indicates that 6:14–7:1 warns against fraternization with those outside the community. But such a warning hardly seems to fit into the larger context in which 6:14–7:1 appears.¹⁷

Curiously, despite his strong argument, Emmerling resisted concluding that the passage was interpolated by someone besides Paul. Rather, he ultimately decided that Paul himself must have stuck these problematic verses in their current place when re-reading his letter.¹⁸ But, despite his unwillingness to follow through on his discovery, Emmerling nevertheless spotlighted a problematic passage that has been the subject of debate ever since. Unlike Emmerling, many scholars who followed—recognizing the poor fit of the passage—concluded that 2 Cor 6:14–7:1 must be a later interpolation, placed in its current location by someone other than the apostle.

After the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the mid-twentieth century, two scholars, Joachim Gnilka and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, each noted the similarity of the passage's language to that found in the Qumran scrolls. As a result, both argued separately that 6:14–7:1 must represent a text produced by Christian Essenes. For one reason or another, they suggested, this wayward text had found its way into 2 Corinthians.¹⁹ Hans Dieter Betz, writing at approximately the same time as Gnilka and Fitzmyer, recognized the affinity of the fragment not to Essene thought but to the theology of Paul's Galatian opposition.

17 Paul only mentions “unbelievers” once in all of 2:14–7:4 (excluding 6:14–7:1), in 4:4. But, as we will see in a later chapter, the apostle there seems to be referring to members of the Corinthian *ἐκκλησία*, not those outside the assembly.

18 Emmerling, *Epistola Pauli*, 78.

19 Joachim Gnilka, “2 Cor 6:14–7:1 in Light of the Qumran Texts and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” in *Paul and Qumran*, ed. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor (London: Chapman, 1968), 48–68 and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “Qumran and the Interpolated Paragraph in 2 Cor 6:14–7:1,” in his *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London: Chapman, 1971), 205–17.

He suggested, based on that affinity, that the passage was more than a *non*-Pauline interpolation. Indeed, it must represent an *anti*-Pauline interpolation, the product of the apostle's opponents.²⁰

But while these three scholars claimed that 2 Cor 6:14–7:1 showed similarities to the literature of the Qumran community or Paul's Judaizing opponents in Corinth, others tied these verses to Paul himself. Hans Windisch, for example, writing earlier in the twentieth century, hypothesized that 6:14–7:1 did indeed belong to 2 Corinthians, but it was out of place. He suggested that it had originally followed 6:2.²¹ J.-F. Collange, writing at about the same time as Gnika, Fitzmyer, and Betz, proposed that 6:14–7:1 could be explained as one of two alternative endings to Paul's letter, a letter that began at 2:14; the epistle, Collange argued, had been intended for two different locations and so had two different endings.²²

Still others, however, insisted that 6:14–7:1 was part of Paul's lost letter to Corinth, mentioned in 1 Cor 5:9. There Paul describes his previous epistle as follows:

9 I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral persons—¹⁰ not at all meaning the immoral of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since you would then need to go out of the world.

Although 6:14–7:1 does not specifically mention immoral persons, the similarity of ideas in 1 Cor 5:9 and 6:14–7:1 (specifically, the separation of insiders from outsiders) nevertheless convinced several notable scholars—including Johannes Weiss, Kirsopp Lake, and Edgar Goodspeed—that Paul's earlier letter was not entirely lost but that some of it came to be inserted at some point into 2 Corinthians.²³

20 Hans Dieter Betz, "2 Cor 6:14–7:1: An Anti-Pauline Fragment?" *JBL* 92 (1973): 88–108.

21 Windisch, *zweite Korintherbrief*, 220.

22 J.-F. Collange, *Énigmes de la deuxième épître de Paul aux Corinthiens: Étude exégétique de 2 Cor. 2:14–7:4*, SNTSMS (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 302–17.

23 For the earliest mention of this idea, suggested only as a possibility, see Adolf Hilgenfeld, *Historisch-kritische Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Leipzig: Fues [R. Reisland], 1875), 287, n. 1. At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, the idea was also promoted by R. Whitelaw, "A Fragment of the Lost Epistle to the Corinthians," *CR* 4 (1890): 12 and Carl Clemen, *Paulus, sein Leben und Wirken* (Giessen: Ricker, Töpelmann, 1904), 1:77–78, 85; 2:202. While Johannes Weiss mentions that 6:14–7:1 represents part of Paul's earlier letter only as a possibility in his commentary on 1 Corinthians (*Der erste Korintherbrief*, 9th ed. KEK 7 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910], xli), he affirms it in his later, posthumously published, *Das Urchristentum*, ed. Rudolf Knopf (Göttingen:

Writing toward the end of the twentieth century (1991), N.H. Taylor concluded likewise. He saw in 2 Cor 6:14–7:1 affinities with earlier ideas found in the Corinthian correspondence.²⁴ For example, he argued that Paul's opening admonition in 6:14, "Do not be mismatched (ἐτεροζυγοῦντες) with unbelievers"—a warning to the Corinthian community to avoid future marriages with outsiders—is fully compatible with Paul's insistence in 1 Corinthians that all new marriages be "in the Lord" (1 Cor 7:39b). Furthermore, Taylor claimed links between 2 Cor 6:14–7:1 and the issue of meat sacrificed to idols (εἰδωλόθυτα), a subject that Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10.²⁵

Of all of the possibilities mentioned, the suggestion that 2 Cor 6:14–7:1 represents part of Paul's earlier, lost letter to the Corinthians is a strong one. Unfortunately, however, it is not ultimately conclusive. But, regardless of the origin of 2 Cor 6:14–7:1 (that is, whether it represents part of a lost Pauline letter, a non-Pauline document, or an anti-Pauline polemic), it seems apparent that this fragment did not originally belong to 2 Cor 2:14–7:4. This is an important finding because the likelihood of editorial activity at 6:14–7:1 increases the likelihood of other such redactional activity within the confines of the canonical letter.²⁶ This is particularly important for the present study for it has a direct bearing on the possibility that 2:14–7:4 represents an independent letter (an idea to be explored below). In other words, if 6:14–7:1 does not belong in its current context, that means that someone *deliberately inserted it* in the location where it now resides.²⁷ If someone inserted 6:14–7:1 into its present

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1917) ET: Johannes Weiss, *Earliest Christianity*, trans. and ed. Frederick C. Grant (New York: Harper, 1959), 356; cf. Kirsopp Lake, *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul* (London: Rivingtons, 1911), 122–23; and Edgar Johnson Goodspeed, *Paul* (Philadelphia: Winston, 1947), 231. For a more complete list of those who have favored this idea in the early and mid twentieth century, see Windisch, *zweite Korintherbrief*, 18–19 and John Collidge Hurd, Jr., *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1983), 236, n. 1.

24 N.H. Taylor, "The Composition and Chronology of 2 Corinthians," *JSNT* 44 (1991): 75–78.

25 For instance, in 2 Cor 6:16, the question is posed, "what agreement has the temple of God with idols?" This question, Taylor suggested, is similar to the apostle's connection between εἰδωλόθυτα and demon worship in 1 Cor 10:20–21. The connection between 6:14–7:1 and εἰδωλόθυτα had already been made by Gordon Fee in his "11 Corinthians VI.14–VII.1 and Food Offered to Idols," *NTS* 23 (1977): 140–61.

26 Taylor, "Composition and Chronology," 70.

27 For a discussion of the reason that a redactor would have inserted 6:14–7:1 into its present location, see Paul B. Duff, "The Mind of the Redactor: 2 Cor 6:14–7:1 in Its Secondary Context," *NovT* 35 (1993): 160–80.

canonical context, that person could have also embedded 2:14–7:4 in its current location.²⁸

The Independence of Chapters 10–13 and the Question of Chronology

In 1870, roughly a century after Semler had introduced his ground-breaking hypothesis, Adolf Hausrath published a very brief book focused on the last four chapters of 2 Corinthians (10–13).²⁹ In that work, Hausrath, like Semler before him, insisted that the final four chapters of the canonical letter did not originally belong to the same letter as the earlier chapters. Instead, they represented a separate letter. However, in contrast to Semler, Hausrath postulated that 2 Corinthians 10–13 was sent to Corinth *prior* to 2 Corinthians 1–9. Furthermore, Hausrath claimed that these chapters represented Paul's painful letter (a letter alluded to in 2 Cor 2:4, 9 and 7:8–12). In his study, Hausrath contrasted four issues represented both in chapters 1–9 and in chapters 10–13 that convinced him that the latter represent an earlier work. The first issue focused on the case of incest originally raised in 1 Cor 5:1–5. Hausrath saw the same issue lying behind both 2 Cor 13:1 on the one hand and 2 Cor 2:5–8 and 7:11–12 on the other. The latter verses, he insisted, must have been written before the former. Hausrath also compared the state of the collection, Paul's travel plans, and the apostle's dispute with his opponents in both 2 Corinthians 1–9 and 10–13 to support his hypothesis.

While Hausrath's arguments were influential, they were not nearly as persuasive as those made a generation later by James Houghton Kennedy, an Irish scholar who arrived independently at the same conclusion.³⁰ Kennedy, like Hausrath, contrasted a number of passages from 2 Corinthians 2 with corresponding sections in chapters 10–13 in order to demonstrate the chronological

28 It should be noted that one would not have to propose the same degree of intentionality in other possible editorial activity with 2 Corinthians 8, 2 Corinthians 9, or 2 Corinthians 10–13 (other possible independent letters, as we will see), for these could have simply been copied, one after the other (of course, minus their epistolary introductions and conclusions).

29 Adolf Hausrath, *Der Vier-Capitel-Brief Des Paulus an die Korinther* (Heidelberg: Bassermann, 1870). Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain a copy of Hausrath's work. My summary is therefore based upon Betz (2 Corinthians 8 and 9, 12–13) and Thrall (*Second Epistle*, 5–6 and 13–14).

30 James Houghton Kennedy, *The Second and Third Epistles of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (London: Methuen, 1900). Others who argued for the priority of chs. 10–13 include Kirsopp Lake (*Earlier Epistles*) and Alfred Plummer (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, ICC [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1915]).

priority of the latter.³¹ Kennedy likewise identified chapters 10–13 with Paul's painful letter. He argued that the early verses of chapter 2 represent:

... the very paragraph in which the apostle is speaking of having written out of much affliction, so that unless the correspondence be merely apparent, it is a direct identification of [2 Corinthians 12:10] as part of the epistle referred to ... as written ἐκ πολλῆς θλίψεως.³²

By proposing chapters 10–13 as chronologically prior to chapters 1–9, both Hausrath and Kennedy effectively solved the problem of the lost intermediate letter (*Zwischenbrief*) raised by Bleek and Ewald.

The hypothesis that chapters 10–13 were chronologically prior to 1–9 and represented Paul's painful letter persuaded many in the early years of the twentieth century, especially in the English-speaking world.³³ However, despite that early popularity, this hypothesis lost significant ground by the middle of the century due to a couple of significant criticisms. The first criticism pointed out that, while the painful letter (as described by Paul in chapters 2 and 7) alludes to an *individual* opponent *from within* the community, chapters 10–13 seems to be directed at *multiple* opponents *from elsewhere*. The second indicated that the offense referred to in 7:12—ostensibly, the reason that Paul wrote the painful letter—seems nowhere in evidence in chapters 10–13.

Despite its loss of influence, several scholars writing in the second half of the twentieth century concurred with *one* part of Hausrath and Kennedy's conclusions. In important commentaries published in the 1970s and 1980s, C.K. Barrett, F.F. Bruce, and Victor Paul Furnish proposed, as had Hausrath and Kennedy, that canonical 2 Corinthians consisted of two letters (2 Corinthians 1–9 and 2 Corinthians 10–13). However, they argued for the opposite chronology: chapters 1–9 represents the earlier and 10–13 the later of the two letters.³⁴ Particularly important for these scholars was the recognition, originally put forth by Johannes Weiss, that the *past* visit of Titus and the

31 Kennedy, *Second and Third Epistles*, 80–85.

32 Kennedy, *Second and Third Epistles*, 82.

33 Francis Watson goes so far as to suggest that there was consensus among the English-speaking scholars of the first half of the twentieth century in favor of this hypothesis. However, the hypothesis that chapters 10–13 chronologically preceded chapters 1–9 never gained widespread support among German scholars ("2 Cor X–XIII and Paul's Painful Letter to the Corinthians," *Journal of Theological Studies* 35 [1984]: 328–29).

34 Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 21; F.F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, NCB (London: Oliphants, 1971), 166–70; Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians*, Anchor Bible 32a (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984), 35–48; and (hesitantly) Martin, *2 Corinthians*, xlv–xlvi.

unnamed “brother,” mentioned in 12:18, must be identified with the *future* visit of the same two mentioned in 2 Corinthians 8.³⁵

According to this proposed chronology of the two-letter hypothesis, Timothy arrived in Corinth after the community received 1 Corinthians, as Paul had anticipated (1 Cor 16:10–11). Upon his arrival, however, Timothy found an unhappy situation and so he quickly returned to Paul in Ephesus to communicate his concerns to the apostle. In response, Paul hurried to Corinth but, while there, he was insulted and humiliated (cf. 2 Cor 10:10) and so, he returned to Ephesus and sent the painful letter to Corinth. This letter was carried by Titus but is now lost. Worried about the Corinthian response to the painful letter, Paul traveled from Ephesus to Troas in search of Titus, as narrated in 2 Cor 2:12–13, and from there on to Macedonia where the two finally met (7:5–6). When Paul arrived in Macedonia, Titus informed him that the crisis in Corinth had been resolved. As a result, the apostle sent the Corinthians the letter now found in chapters 1–9. Shortly thereafter, however, Paul was informed that the situation in Corinth had again deteriorated and, in response, he sent the letter that now appears in chapters 10–13.³⁶

Although this version of events in Corinth proved influential, Francis Watson, in an article published in 1984, questioned its credibility. He pointed out that this chronology assumes an overly-complex relationship between Paul and the Corinthians. Watson insisted that the chronology proposed by Barrett, Bruce, and Furnish requires one to assume:

... that there were two crises in which the Corinthians showed disloyalty to Paul, two severe letters from Paul, and two reconciliations (the first illusory, the second suggested by the successful completion of the collection referred to in Rom 15:26).³⁷

In an even more pointed remark, focused on the illusory reconciliation mentioned above, Watson insisted that such a chronology:

... is based on the assumption of the incompetence of Titus. He had returned from Corinth with a glowing report about the Corinthians' repentance and loyalty to Paul (7:6ff.), and Paul had written the predominantly joyful and conciliatory 2 Corinthians 1–9 as a result of that report.

35 Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 22; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 41; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, li.

36 Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 16–21; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 54–55; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, xl.

37 Watson, “2 Cor X–XIII,” 332.

However, shortly afterwards more news reached him from Corinth which painted a very different picture.³⁸

In response to these problems, Watson then re-proposed the Hausrath-Kennedy chronology and attempted to refute the objections that had weakened that earlier hypothesis (i.e., that neither the single, offending wrongdoer nor the corresponding offense alluded to in chapters 2 and 7 appear chapter 10–13).

Watson claimed that the offense alluded to in 2 Corinthians 7 can be inferred from chapters 10–13. The offense was the accusation by a member of the community that, when the apostle came to Corinth a second time (the so-called intermediate visit), he had been incapable of carrying out a threat that he had earlier made in 1 Cor 4:18–21, a threat to inflict punishment with supernatural power (1 Cor 4:18–21). Watson furthermore argued that Paul's self-defense in chapters 1–9 (specifically in 2:12–7:4) was a continuation of the self-defense of chapters 10–13. But the defense in the later letter (chapters 1–9) was not just against the offending individual but also against outsiders who came to Corinth and challenged Paul's preaching and conduct. With this proposal, Watson claimed to have found both the solution to the problem of the single wrongdoer and the offense mentioned in 2:5–10 and 7:12.³⁹

The Collection Chapters (Chapters 8 and 9)

While the scholars who proposed dividing 2 Corinthians into two letters (regardless of their chronological priority) resolved some of the tensions within the canonical letter, they did not solve the problems of chapters 8 and 9. In some cases, such problems seemed of little concern to them. A number of other scholars, however, regarded as critical both the relationship *between* those chapters as well as their connection to the text surrounding them for the correct reconstruction of the Corinthian correspondence.

In the early years of the twentieth century, Johannes Weiss took up the challenge of 2 Corinthians 8 by suggesting that it originally stood as an independent letter.⁴⁰ Weiss based his conclusions on a number of things. First was

38 Watson, "2 Cor X–XIII," 332.

39 Watson, "2 Cor X–XIII," 340–46.

40 Weiss, *Earliest Christianity*, 353–57. It should be noted that Weiss was not the first (following Semler) to try to address this problem. Others were H. Hagge, who wrote at about the same time as Hausrath ("Die beiden überlieferten Sendschreiben des Apostles Paulus and die Gemeinde zu Korinth," *Jahrbücher Für Protestantische Theologie* 2 [1876]: 481–531) and the Danish scholar, J.H.A. Michelsen, who wrote a few years before ("T Verhaal

the problematic relationship between it and the chapter that follows in the canonical letter. "It is easy to see," he argued, "that the collection is introduced in 9:1 as if there had been no previous mention of it."⁴¹ Because of this, he contended, chapter 8 could not have come before it. Second, as indicated above, Weiss recognized that Titus's visit to Corinth, mentioned in 2 Cor 12:17–18, must have taken place *after* the composition of 2 Corinthians 8, for the latter chapter initiated the visit referred to in chapter 12. Weiss further insisted that chapter 8 could not possibly have been written *after* the commencement of the dispute between Paul and the Corinthians because the apostle's praise for the community in that chapter is effusive. Consequently, Weiss concluded that chapter 8 must have been composed prior to everything else in 2 Corinthians except 6:14–7:1 (which, as we saw above, he viewed as a fragment of the letter mentioned in 1 Cor 5:9).⁴²

Hans Windisch, for his part, viewed both chapters as distinct from their canonical surroundings and, as a result, he treated them in a separate section of his 1924 commentary.⁴³ He furthermore proposed that, although they both dealt with the same topic, namely, the collection for the Jerusalem church, they had not originally been joined together.⁴⁴ Chapter 8, Windisch argued, likely represented the earlier of the two letters, although chapter 9 was probably composed not long after it. Noting that Paul refers to Achaia in the latter chapter, Windisch suggested the possibility that chapter 9 had originally been sent to the other churches in that province while chapter 8 had gone to Corinth.⁴⁵

Later in the twentieth century, Günther Bornkamm also raised the possibility that both 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 were separate letters.⁴⁶ While Bornkamm allowed for the possibility that chapter 8 had originally been appended to the end of chapter 7, he also acknowledged that it could have been an independent missive. Bornkamm saw in at least chapter 9 (and possibly 8) the concluding document(s) in the Corinthian correspondence, composed after the conflict between Paul and the community had been finally resolved. The idea

vaan Paulus' vlucht uit Damascus, 2 Kor XI:32, 33; XII:1,71 een interpolatie," *Theologisch Tijdschrift* 7 [1873]: 421–29). See Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 15.

41 Weiss, *Earliest Christianity*, 353.

42 Weiss, *Earliest Christianity*, 353.

43 Windisch, *zweite Korintherbrief*, 242–89.

44 Windisch, *zweite Korintherbrief*, 287.

45 Windisch, *zweite Korintherbrief*, 287–88.

46 Günther Bornkamm, "Die Vorgeschichte des sogenannten zweiten Korintherbriefes," in *Geschichte und Glaube, Zweiter Teil*, BEVT 53 (Munich: Kaiser, 1971), 186–87.

that the chapters originally represented independent letters and were likely written after the resolution of the crisis gained support among various prominent scholars in the decades that followed.⁴⁷

Included among these scholars was Hans Dieter Betz who, in 1985, published a commentary that focused solely on 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. Like Bornkamm, he ultimately concluded that these two chapters were composed after the crisis between Paul and the community had been resolved.⁴⁸ Furthermore, he argued that each of the chapters represents an administrative letter that displays a comprehensive rhetorical structure; as such each exhibits significant affinity with other such ancient documents. Like Windisch, Betz also thought that chapter 8 was addressed to Corinth while chapter 9 was sent to the other churches in Achaia.⁴⁹

In the early years of the twenty-first century, Margaret M. Mitchell returned to Weiss's suggestion that 2 Corinthians 8 represents an early letter in the correspondence. In a number of important articles, she argued that 2 Corinthians 8 represents the earliest of the letters that make up canonical 2 Corinthians. Furthermore, this letter provides us with a window into the beginnings of the deteriorating relationship between Paul and the community.⁵⁰ One argument for the separation of chapter 8 from that which precedes it is Mitchell's recognition of Paul's use of deliberative rhetoric in chapter 8. While such a rhetorical style appears in 1 Corinthians, most of 2 Corinthians is characterized by forensic rhetoric. Paul's deliberative style in 2 Corinthians 8 suggests, so Mitchell argues, that the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians was still cordial when chapter 8 was composed. Hence, it must precede the other letters found

47 E.g., Dieter Georgi, *Opponents*, 17 (cf. also his *Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1992], 68–79); Norman Perrin, *The New Testament: An Introduction* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 104–5; Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, vol. 2: *History and Literature of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 126–30.

48 Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 141–44.

49 Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 92.

50 Margaret M. Mitchell, "Korintherbriefe," *RGK* 4 (2002): 1688–94; idem, "The Corinthian Correspondence and the Birth of Pauline Hermeneutics," in *Paul and the Corinthians: Studies on a Community in Conflict. Essays in Honour of Margaret Thrall*, ed. Trevor J. Burke, J. Keith Elliott (Leiden: Brill, 2003); and idem, "Paul's Letters to Corinth: The Interpretive Intertwining of Literary and Historical Reconstruction," in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, ed. Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 307–39.

in 2 Corinthians.⁵¹ Because of the importance of Mitchell's argument for the present study, further discussion of it will appear in the next chapter.

The Separation of 2:14–7:4 from 1:1–2:13 and 7:5–16

In the early years of the twentieth century, the problematic breaks between 2 Cor 2:12 and 14 on the one hand and 2 Cor 7:4 and 5 on the other raised important questions about the origin of 2:14–7:4. In the verses immediately preceding 2:14 (2:12–13), Paul begins a narrative focused on his anxious search for Titus. But, surprisingly, the apostle suddenly breaks off in 2:14 and opens a lengthy defense of his ministry. In 2 Corinthians 7, between verses 4 and 5, another odd break appears. While 7:4 seems to conclude Paul's defense of his ministry, 7:5 once again takes up the narration of the apostle's search for Titus as though no interruption had occurred. As a result of these unexpected breaks in the text, both Anton Halmel and Johannes Weiss proposed that the placement of 2:14–7:4 must be secondary. They suggested that the section had originally been independent.⁵² Weiss famously wrote, that with 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 removed, "2:13 and 7:5 fit in to each other as neatly as the broken pieces of a ring."⁵³

But, if 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 does not belong in its current context, where did it come from? Halmel understood it to be part of Paul's last letter to Corinth, a letter that also included chapter 9.⁵⁴ Weiss, on the other hand, saw 2:14–7:4 (excluding 6:14–7:1) as part of a letter that had been sent by the apostle at the height of the Corinthian crisis. As he understood it, 2:14–7:4 (minus 6:14–7:1) had originally belonged to a longer apologetic letter that had included chapters 10–13.⁵⁵ This apology was identified by Weiss as Paul's painful letter.⁵⁶ Weiss

51 Mitchell, "Corinthian Correspondence," 22–23.

52 Anton Halmel, *Der zweite Korintherbrief des Apostles Paulus: Geschichtliche und literar-kritische Untersuchungen* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1904), 79–86; Weiss, *Earliest Christianity*, 348–49, 357.

53 Weiss, *Earliest Christianity*, 349.

54 According to Halmel, this letter was sent after chapters 10–13. Halmel proposed that Paul had defeated his Jewish adversaries with the letter contained in chapters 10–13; the apostle, however, still believed that he had to win back the community. This, in Halmel's eyes was the purpose of 2:14–7:4 (*zweite Korintherbrief*; 79–86).

55 As noted above, Weiss believed 2 Cor 6:14–7:1 to be part of Paul's lost letter mentioned in 1 Cor 5:9.

56 Weiss's idea that 2:14–7:4 and 10–13 made up part of the same letter was later taken up by Rudolf Bultmann (*The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, Roy A. Harrisville [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985], 17–18) and Philipp Vielhauer (*Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur: Einleitung in das Neue Testament, die Apokryphen und die Apostolischen Väter*, de Gruyter Lehrbuch [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975], 153).

ultimately concluded that at some point, 2:14–7:4 (minus 6:14–7:1) had been separated from chapters 10–13 and the former had been inserted into Paul's last, conciliatory letter to Corinth.⁵⁷

The notion that 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 did not originally belong in its surrounding context (i.e., within 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16) and constituted an independent letter was embraced by many later scholars.⁵⁸ And, in fact, by the middle of the twentieth century, it became the dominant view. In more recent years, however, the independence of this section of the canonical letter has been called into question by scholars of recent notable commentaries such as Furnish and Thrall.⁵⁹ Chief among the objections to the independence of 2:14–7:4 have been the following observations:

- 1) Close verbal links exist between 7:4 and 7:5–16;
- 2) The discontinuity between 2:13 and 14 can be explained without having to propose 2:14–7:4 as an independent letter;
- 3) The contrast in tone between 2:14–7:4 and the section surrounding it (1:1–2:13 and 7:5–16) has been exaggerated;
- 4) No manuscript or patristic evidence exists to indicate that 2 Corinthians was made up of more than one letter,⁶⁰

But how compelling are these objections? Because of the importance of understanding the context of 2:14–7:4 for the current study, we will examine each in some detail in the sections that follow.

57 It should be noted that Weiss considered chapter 9 to be part of this final letter (*Earliest Christianity*, 356–57).

58 For example, Windisch pointed out the thematic connections between chapter 2 and 7:5–16 (*zweite Korintherbrief*, 224). More recently, L.L. Welborn has shown that each of the verbal elements mentioned in 2:12–13 has a corresponding component in 7:5: The participle describing the apostle's journey, ἐλθὼν in 2:12 and ἐλθόντων in 7:5; the conjunction δέ in 2:12 and γάρ in 7:5; the destination (εἰς τὴν Τρωάδα in 2:12 and εἰς Μακεδονίαν in 7:5); a negative (οὐκ in 2:13 and οὐδεμία in 7:5); the perfect verb (ἔσχηκα in 2:13 and ἔσκηκεν in 7:5); the relief not found (ἄνεσις in both 2:13 and 7:5); and that aspect of the apostle that did not find relief, πνεῦμα in 2:13 and σάρεξ in 7:5 (" 'Like Broken Pieces of a Ring': 2 Cor 1.1–2:13; 7.5–16 and Ancient Theories of Literary Unity" NTS 42 [1996]: 562).

59 Furnish, as we have already seen considered 2:14–7:4 to be part of chapters 1–9 (*II Corinthians*, 35). Thrall (*Second Epistle*, 20–25), on the other hand, maintained that 2:14–7:4 was part of a letter made up of chapters 1–8.

60 Most of these are argued by Thrall in her commentary (*Second Epistle*, 20–25). She also includes a number of other arguments that I have not mentioned because their weaknesses seem obvious.

Verbal Links between 2 Cor 7:4 and 7:5–16

One of the most frequently cited objections to the separation of 2:14–7:4 from the text that surrounds it is the suggestion that verbal links exist between the very last verse of 2:14–7:4 (i.e., 7:4) and 7:5–16 and these links suggest that no clear break exists between 7:4 and 7:5. As a result, so the argument goes, 7:5–16 is compatible with what has come before it. But where exactly are these links and do they provide a strong enough connection to overcome the seemingly radical breaks at 2:14 and 7:5?

The most important proposed link focuses on the term *παράκλησις*, which appears in 7:4 as well as in 7:7 and 13. Besides the noun *παράκλησις*, its corresponding verbal form, *παρακαλέω* also appears, in 7:6, 7, and 13, all passages that follow the supposed break. How significant is the proximity of the *παράκλησις*/*παρακαλέω* cluster in 7:5–13 to the appearance of the term *παράκλησις* in 7:4? While on the surface the link looks impressive, its significance diminishes significantly with the recognition of the widespread use of these terms throughout Paul's letters. The apostle uses the verb *παρακαλέω* no fewer than forty times in his undisputed letters and the noun *παράκλησις* eighteen times. Each term appears in six of the seven undisputed letters (the exception being Galatians).⁶¹ The frequent use of these terms in Paul's letters could therefore indicate as much the dominance of the concept of *παράκλησις* in the apostle's theology as any specific link between 7:4 and 7:5–16. Nevertheless, this recognition does not by itself dispel the possibility of a link between 7:4 and 7:5–16 based on the term.

However, the possibility of a close link between 7:4 and 7:5–16 further deteriorates with the recognition of the importance of *παρακαλέω* and *παράκλησις* in certain parts of canonical 2 Corinthians and its relative unimportance in others. In the texts surrounding 2:14–7:4 (i.e., 1:1–2:13 and 7:5–16), these terms appear frequently. However, they are rare in 2:14–7:4 itself. In fact, of the eleven appearances of the noun *παράκλησις* in canonical 2 Corinthians, nine occur in the text that surrounds 2:14–7:4 (i.e., 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16). Ten of the nineteen appearances of the verb *παρακαλέω* are also found in that same section. If 2 Cor 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16 represents a letter sent to the community after the resolution of the crisis in Corinth as some have suggested, then the predominance of these terms in this surrounding text would hardly be surprising.⁶²

But, as mentioned above, in contrast to the frequent appearance of *παράκλησις* and *παρακαλέω* in the text that surrounds 2:14–7:4, these terms are

61 Given the nature of the Galatian letter, it is hardly surprising that the terms are absent in that letter.

62 We will look at this idea in more detail below in our discussion of Bornkamm's hypotheses.

rarely found in that section itself. The noun *παράκλησις* only appears once (in 7:4) and the related verb, *παρακαλέω*, only twice (in 5:20 and 6:1). In the latter two places (i.e., where the verb *παρακαλέω* appears), the focus is on Paul's role as the ambassador for the deity and so the term bears a significantly different meaning than *παρακαλέω* (or the corresponding noun *παράκλησις*) does in 1:1–2:13 and 7:5–16. To be specific, in 5:20 and 6:1, *παρακαλέω* carries the meaning “to appeal” in the sense that, as ambassador, Paul is making an appeal on behalf of the one who commissioned him. In 5:20, he states: “So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us (ὡς τοῦ θεοῦ παρακαλοῦντος δι’ ἡμῶν). . . .” Similarly, in 6:1, he makes the plea, “As we work together with him, we appeal to you (*παρακαλοῦμεν*) also not to accept the grace of God in vain.”

But, in the text that surrounds 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 (i.e., in 1:1–2:13 and 7:5–16), Paul consistently uses the terms *παράκλησις* and *παρακαλέω* to focus on comfort, consolation, and encouragement. For instance, in 1:3–7, the apostle speaks of God comforting him in his affliction and the apostle in turn comforting others in their affliction. In 2:7–8, Paul commands the Corinthians to comfort the one who has caused sorrow to Paul. In 7:6, he speaks of God comforting him with the appearance of Titus. In 7:7 and 7:13, Paul mentions that Titus has been comforted by the community's repentance. Finally, in those same verses (7:7,13), Paul claims to be comforted by Titus's report about the Corinthian community.

As we can see, because of the way that these terms have been used, it seems more reasonable to argue not for continuity but for discontinuity. The frequent appearance of *παράκλησις* and/or *παρακαλέω* in the text surrounding 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 (i.e., in 2 Cor 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16) and both their relative rarity in 2:14–7:4 and the different meaning that they carry in 5:20 and 6:1 highlights the *discontinuity* between 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16 and 2:14–7:4 rather than the opposite.

Nevertheless, the term *παράκλησις* does indeed appear in 7:4 and there its meaning is more consistent with that found in 1:1–2:13 and in 7:5–16. What are we to make of this? I suggest that Paul's use of *παράκλησις* in 7:4 can be easily explained without reference to any connection with 7:5–16. The text of 7:4 states:

I am completely open (*πολλή μοι παρρησία πρὸς ὑμᾶς*) with you, I am exceedingly proud of you (*πολλή μοι καύχησης ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν*); I am filled with comfort (*πεπλήρωμαι τῇ παρακλήσει*); I am overjoyed in all our affliction (*θλίψει*).

Particularly significant terms in this verse are found at its beginning, *παρρησία* (“openness”), and its end, *θλίψις* (“affliction”). As we will see in the chapters

that follow, concerns about Paul's integrity (specifically, his openness) were bound up with the Corinthians' perception of Paul's afflictions. As a result, both openness and affliction represent key themes appearing throughout the preceding section (2 Cor 2:14–7:4). For our purposes now, however, it is only the former (παρρησία) that is of particular significance.

In 7:4, Paul's comfort as well as his pride (represented by the terms παράκλησις and καύχησις in the middle of the verse) result from his *expectation* that the *apologia* that he has just delivered (beginning in 2:14) will convince the Corinthians of his integrity (i.e., his "openness" with them). It is important to note here, that Paul's comfort (παράκλησις) in 7:4 is dependent upon the Corinthians' *future* reaction to the defense that he has just concluded; Paul anticipates that the Corinthians will be swayed by his defense and he is comforted by that expectation. But is it not possible that Paul claims comfort based upon present reality rather than future hope?

While such is not impossible, it seems highly unlikely based primarily on Paul's denial of wrongdoing that almost immediately precedes his claim for παράκλησις: "we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have defrauded no one" (7:2). The fact that the Corinthians can entertain such suspicions about the apostle strongly suggests that something was seriously amiss in the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians at the time that this verse was penned.

This is an extremely important point because the context of 7:5–16 indicates, to the contrary, that the παράκλησις experienced by Paul and Titus in 7:5–13 is a *present reality* rather than a *future hope*. This is because the παράκλησις has resulted from the *current* understanding that seems to exist between Paul and the Corinthian community. That is to say, in 7:5–16, there are no grounds to assume that Paul and the Corinthians still misunderstand one another: Titus has conveyed to Paul the news that his letter had achieved repentance on the part of the Corinthians. The reality of the Corinthians' current trust in the apostle (versus Paul's *hope* that the Corinthians' doubts about his integrity will be dispelled) is the basis for Paul's comfort in 7:7 and 13.⁶³

In sum, the argument for the presence of a link between 7:4 and the verses that follow based on the use of the terms παράκλησις in 7:4 and παράκλησις/παράκαλέω in 7:5–16 does not bear up under scrutiny. Rather the different

63 Welborn, "Broken Pieces," 577, n. 74. Vegge argues to the contrary that 7:5–16 narrates only a partial rapprochement between Paul and the Corinthians rather than a full reconciliation. By so doing, Vegge attempts to lessen the tension between the future hope of παράκλησις in 7:4 and its present reality in 7:5–16 (2 Corinthians, 206–7). Nevertheless, Paul's mention of repentance on the part of the community can hardly be gratuitous. It is certainly a present reality that gives Paul comfort.

meanings that the terms carry in 1:1–2:13 and 7:5–16 versus the way they are intended in 5:20 and 6:1 suggest discontinuity rather than continuity. In the one place where *παράκλησις* bears the same or a similar meaning that it does in 1:1–2:13 and 7:5–16, there also seems to be a suggestion of discontinuity rather than continuity. In 7:4, Paul's comfort (*παράκλησις*) is based upon his *expectation* that the Corinthians will be swayed by his apologetic argument (an argument beginning in 2:14). That is to say, at the time that Paul wrote 7:4, discord existed between Paul and the community. But, Paul hoped that when the Corinthians read his apology (i.e., 2:14–7:4), he would be comforted by their acceptance of it. However, in the verses that follow, Paul's comfort (as well as Titus's) is a *present* reality, based upon the restored harmony between Paul and the community.

A second proposed verbal linkage of significance centers on the term *καύχησις* ("boasting"), which appears in 7:4 and 7:14 (where the related verb *καυχάομαι* also appears). But the claim for continuity based upon Paul's use of this term is also problematic. No one would dispute that boasting was an important issue in Corinth from the first for it is reflected *throughout* the Corinthian correspondence.⁶⁴ Altogether, the related terms *καύχησις*, *καύχημα*, and *καυχάομαι* appear thirty-one times in the two canonical letters (of the forty-five times they are found in the undisputed letters). Because of the prevalence of the idea of boasting in the Corinthian correspondence, the suggestion of a verbal link between 7:4 and the few verses that follow based upon Paul's use of *καύχησις* in 7:4 and 7:14 is hardly persuasive.⁶⁵ Furthermore, as with the term *παράκλησις*, there also seems to be a temporal disjunction here. Paul's pride in the Corinthians in 7:4 is based upon his expectation that the Corinthians will (in the *future*) come to believe in his integrity. To the contrary, Paul's pride in or boasting over (*καύχησις*) the community (before Titus) in the verses that follow is depicted as a *present* reality. In those later verses, we can see that Paul's past boast to Titus over the community has been vindicated by the Corinthians' repentance, a repentance that is only hoped for in 7:4.⁶⁶

64 We will discuss this in more detail below in chapter 3.

65 A counter example can help to illustrate this point. The term *καύχημα* and the related verb *καυχάομαι* appear in both 2 Corinthians 9 (*καύχημα* in 9:3 and *καυχάομαι* in 9:2) and in 2 Corinthians 10 (*καυχάομαι* in 10:8, 13, 15, 16, and 17). However, few scholars support the notion that chapters 9 and 10 belong to the same letter as a result (even if one were to include the other verbal linkages between chapters 9 and 10, of which there are several).

66 Another claim, focused on the alleged connection between *θλίψις* in 7:4 and *θλιβόμενοι* in 7:5 is even less persuasive. Like the terms *παράκλησις* and *παρακαλέω*, *θλίψις* and *θλίβω* are important terms throughout Paul's letters, together appearing twenty-two times in the undisputed letters. They are however particularly significant in the Corinthian correspondence, as the predominance of hardship catalogues in these letters would suggest.

To conclude, the argument for continuity between 7:4 and the verses that follow based upon verbal links is not persuasive. The few—and I would argue coincidental—verbal similarities are greatly overshadowed by the enormous differences between 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 and 7:5–16 (as well as 1:1–2:13). They are also undone by the disparity displayed between Paul’s hope that the Corinthians will respond favorably to his apology in 7:4 and the vindication of that hope that we see (arising from the Corinthians’ repentance) in 7:5–16.⁶⁷

The Discontinuity between 2 Cor 2:13 and 2:14 Can Be Explained

There have been a number of attempts to make sense of the abrupt change in subject matter between 2:13 and 2:14. Those who would minimize the significance of the break have attempted to demonstrate an underlying logic that ties 2:12–13 to 2:14–17. Once that logic is recognized, it is argued, then the seeming abrupt change of subject matter—i.e., from the search for Titus to a defense of Paul’s ministry—no longer presents a significant interpretive problem.

One noteworthy attempt to explain the move from 2:13 to 2:14 was made by Alfred Plummer in the early years of the twentieth century. Plummer suggested the following rationale for Paul’s sudden thanksgiving in 2:14—a thanksgiving that Plummer refers to as “a noble digression of irrepressible gratitude”:

[Paul’s] gratitude [in 2:14] is evoked by the thought of the intense [shift] of feeling from anxiety to joy when he met Titus and heard that all was well in Corinth. To seek for any other explanation is an unintelligent waste of time. The remembrance of the victory of God’s cause at Corinth leads him on to think of the triumph of the gospel generally, and of the very subordinate but glorious share which apostolic missionaries have in that triumph.⁶⁸

Consequently, the appearance of *χαίψις* in 7:4 and *χαίβόμενοι* in 7:5 cannot be said to mean much.

67 Of course, Bultmann explained the verbal correspondence between 7:4 and 7:5–16 as arising from the redactor’s placement of the text. In other words, the redactor recognized the verbal connections between 7:4 and 7:5–16 and this motivated him or her to place 2:14–7:4 in its current location, with 7:4 contiguous with 7:5–16 (Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 179). Bornkamm, on the other hand, regarded the final portion of 7:4 (which contained a number of the verbal similarities to 7:5–16) to be a redactional insertion, added when the canonical letter received its current form (“Vorgeschichte,” 185). Either of these scenarios is possible.

68 Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 67. This idea had earlier been suggested by Heinrich A.W. Meyer (*Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Corinthians*, vol. 2, trans.

In other words, as Plummer understands the events behind the text, Paul's unbridled joy at hearing Titus's good news about Corinth gave way to his impromptu, enthusiastic thanksgiving in 2:14: "But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads in every place the scent that comes from knowing him." This thanksgiving, in turn, led Paul to the subject of his ministry. Once this chain of logic is understood, Plummer argues, Paul's seemingly unexpected change of subject is easily explained. The problem with Plummer's particular explanation, however, is obvious. Immediately preceding the dramatic change in subject in 2:14, Paul does *not* narrate the good news from Titus. He does not narrate it until 7:7, *following* the lengthy apologetic discourse.⁶⁹ Consequently, Plummer's attempt to explain Paul's sudden shift in subject at 2:14 is hardly persuasive.

Another attempt to smooth over the gap between 2:13 and 14 came from Francis Watson in his 1984 article, mentioned above. Watson insisted that Paul's focus in these verses was on the contrast between human weakness and divine power and, as such, the verses immediately preceding the dramatic shift in subject have much that is thematically in common with those that follow. In his words:

[2 Cor 2:12ff.] is not simply a piece of autobiography (as such, it is of no real relevance to the Corinthians), but a description of a missionary failure. Paul had come to Troas not just in search of Titus but to preach the gospel of Christ; the Lord had created the opportunity for effective preaching; yet Paul was so worried about Titus and the news he would bring from Corinth that he completely failed to take the opportunity. Because he is not concerned to give up-to-date information about his travels, he does not immediately pass on to the sequel (7:5ff.), but reflects on the theological significance of his "failure." [According to 2:14ff.,] it is the one who is "dead" to whom God gives "life," and it is the apostle who has just failed to proclaim the message through whom God nevertheless spreads the knowledge of Christ.⁷⁰

While Watson's suggestion is imaginative and innovative, it is nevertheless also problematic. In the first place, although one might concede that 2 Cor 2:12–13 gives evidence of a failed mission, that is not at all where the emphasis of the

W.P. Dickson [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1879], 179–80) and also C.F. Georg Heinrici (*Der zweite Brief an die Korinther*, KEK 6 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1900], 101–2).

69 Windisch, *zweite Korintherbrief*, 96; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 23–24.

70 Watson, "2 Cor X–XIII," 336–37.

verses lies. Rather, Paul's intent here is to convey his *concern* for the Corinthian community—concern that overrode everything, including his missionary opportunity. Paul nowhere implies that it was his weakness that caused him to abandon Troas. Rather, it was his abounding love for the Corinthians and his longing for news of their repentance that sent him to Macedonia.

Second, even if we were to assume for the sake of argument, that 2:12–13 is about human weakness, there nonetheless exists a significant disconnect between 2:12–13 and what follows in 2:14–16. According to the earlier verses, Paul abandoned Troas for Macedonia in order to find Titus. As a result, God's exercise of power (i.e., the creation of the "open door" in Troas) was, Watson suggests, stymied by Paul's human weakness. But, in the verses that follow (2:14–16), Paul insists that it is not *in spite of* but *through* his human weakness—i.e., through his battered, sickly body—that the life-giving power of the deity is spread "in every place."⁷¹ Consequently, Watson's attempt to minimize the distance between 2:12–13 and the verses that follow, like the earlier attempt by Plummer, ultimately fails.

A third attempt to explain the discontinuity between 2 Cor 2:13 and 2:14 originated with Matthias Rissi and was later taken up by Furnish.⁷² It insists that Paul's perspective in 2:12–13 is not forward looking but rather looks back to an earlier part of the text. The apostle's account of his anxiety in 2:12–13 looks back to 2:4 where Paul had narrated his grief while writing the painful letter. Furnish insists:

The apostle is not *beginning* a narrative in vv. 12–13 (which would then be suddenly "broken off" and "continued" only in 7:5ff.); rather, vv. 12–13 conclude his initial effort to assure the Corinthians that he is by no means indifferent to them.⁷³

But this argument, like the others, ultimately fails to persuade. While 2:12–13 certainly look back to that which precedes it, there is no denying that it also looks forward to the resolution, clarification, and further explanation of the events already narrated. This of course would include, first, the conclusion of Paul's search for Titus (7:6); second, Titus' account of the sorrow and grief

⁷¹ Cf. Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 22.

⁷² Matthias Rissi, *Studien zum zweiten Korintherbrief: Der alte Bund-Der Prediger-Der Tod*, ATANT 56 (Zürich: Zwingli, 1969), 15–16; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 171. Cf. Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 23.

⁷³ Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 171. Emphasis in the original.

produced by the painful letter (7:8–11); and, third, the change of heart that the letter brought about among the Corinthians (7:9–11).

Thrall takes a somewhat different approach. Although she, like others before her, claims that the disjunction between 2:13 and 2:14 is typically over-emphasized, she also suggests that the circumstance in which Paul found himself forced him to delay the conclusion of his search for Titus:

In [chapters] 1–7 as a whole, Paul has been defending himself against criticism. Whilst the tone of his apologetic is fairly mild, the very fact of its necessity suggests some slight degree of estrangement between himself and his readers. As he draws the section to a close, he will wish to end on as conciliatory a note as possible, especially if he intends to go on, in [chapter] 8, to urge the Corinthians to greater effort in respect of the collection. Hence, he postpones until this point the description of the joy and comfort afforded him by the response to his letter.⁷⁴

But, assuming for the moment (with Thrall) that chapters 1–8 represent a single letter, the obvious question that the above suggestion raises is why Paul would have begun his narrative about his search for Titus *before* the long discourse about his ministry (2:14–7:4). If Paul was forward-thinking enough to recognize that he needed to end his letter on a conciliatory note, why would he have not told *the whole story* following 2:14–7:4? Would it not have occurred to him that beginning the narrative, only to interrupt for such a long period, would both lessen its impact and cause confusion among his listeners? Consequently, as we can see, Thrall's suggestion does not solve the problem of Paul's sudden change of subject at 2:14. It can explain why Paul would have wanted to narrate the story following the apologetic section (assuming, of course, the unity of chapters 1–8), but it still cannot explain the harsh disjunction between 2:13 and 2:14. In sum, as we can clearly see, the various attempts to explain away the discontinuity between 2:12–13 and 2:14–16 are not persuasive.

The Contrast in Tone between 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 and 2 Cor 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16 is Exaggerated

Many who have argued for the separation of 2:14–7:4 from its current canonical context have insisted that the tone of that passage is incompatible with that of 1:1–2:13 and 7:6–16. Johannes Weiss, for instance, insisted that the tone

⁷⁴ Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 24. It should be noted that this is only one facet of Thrall's argument for not separating 2:14–7:4 from its surrounding context. She also cites with approval the argument of Rissi and Furnish, mentioned above.

of 2:14–7:4 suggests that it was written at the height of Paul's conflict with the community while the section surrounding it (1:1–2:13; 7:5–16) has a “cordial temper,” from which Weiss concluded that it was penned after peace between the apostle and community had been reestablished.⁷⁵

To the contrary, those who argue that 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 was originally part of the same letter as 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16 contend that such a contrast in tone has been exaggerated. Paul, they insist, responds to criticism in 1:17–2:1 as he does throughout 2:14–7:4 and a defensive tone exists in 2:2–4 similar to that in 2:14–7:4. In short, it has been argued that in parts of 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16 (in particular, in 1:17–2:4), Paul sounds much as he does throughout 2:14–7:4 and so it is improper to separate the latter from its canonical context. But are these two texts (1:1–2:13; 7:5–16 compared to 2:14–7:4) really so close to one another as they might initially seem?

In 1:17–2:1, Paul certainly seems to be responding to criticism about his change of travel plans. Obviously, he had told the Corinthians that he was coming to Corinth, but he never showed up:

1:17 Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans according to ordinary human standards, ready to say ‘Yes, yes’ and ‘No, no’ at the same time? ¹⁸ As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been ‘Yes and No.’ ¹⁹ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not ‘Yes and No’; but in him it is always ‘Yes.’ ²⁰ For in him every one of God’s promises is a ‘Yes’ . . . ²³ But I call on God as witness against me: it was to spare you that I did not come again to Corinth. ²⁴ I do not mean to imply that we lord it over your faith; rather, we are workers with you for your joy, because you stand firm in the faith. ^{2:1} So I made up my mind not to make you another painful visit.

The apologetic nature of the above sentences is difficult to deny. Likewise, in the verses immediately following (2:2–4), Paul defensive posture is evident:

2:2 For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? ³ And I wrote as I did, so that when I came, I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice; for I am confident about all of you, that my joy would be the joy of all of you. ⁴ For I wrote to

75 Weiss, *Earliest Christianity*, 345–49.

you out of much distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain, but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

Based upon these two passages, some have argued that those who would separate 2:14–7:4 from 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16 have grossly overstated the differences between these sets of texts. Consequently, 2:14–7:4 should be understood in its canonical context, as part of the same letter as those texts that surround it (specifically, 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16). Of all the objections to separating 2:14–7:4 from 1:1–2:13; 7:2–4, this one, so far, seems to present the most substantive critique.

Nevertheless, while the similarities between 2:14–7:4 and its surrounding text should not be ignored, neither should their differences. In particular, it should be noted that Paul's defensive sentences in 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16 are relatively few. More importantly however, even his defensive statements are set into a context of reconciliation and consolation. In other words, despite the apostle's few apologetic moments, his confidence in the community is apparent throughout most of 1:1–2:13. For example, the apostle tells the Corinthians in 1:7: "our hope for you is unshaken." After recounting his life-threatening *θλίψις* ("affliction") in Asia (1:11), he expresses confidence in the community's willingness to aid him with their prayers. He acknowledges in 1:14 that just as the Corinthians are his boast, so he knows that he is theirs. Indeed, even in the midst of his defensive response about his change in travel plans, he concedes that the Corinthians "stand firm in faith" (1:24). Furthermore, he shows his compassion for the community as a whole in 2:5–8, where he asks the Corinthians to forgive the one who caused pain (*λελύπηκεν*). Finally, he expresses his trust in the community in 2:10, where he states, "Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive." Similar remarks are also apparent in 7:5–16, the passage that immediately follows 2:14–7:4.

On the other hand, the kind of confidence in the community that Paul expresses in 1:1–2:13 is rare in 2:14–7:4. The only place that we find anything that corresponds to the kind of statements listed above is in the very last verse of the apologetic section, in 7:4 where, as mentioned above, Paul's confidence seems to be anticipatory. In the few other places in 2:14–7:4, where Paul's language seems conciliatory, we find upon closer examination that such is not really the case. For example, as we will see in more detail in the chapters that follow, Paul's claim in 3:2—where the apostle tells the community that they are his letter, written on his heart—is less an expression of affection and conciliation than it is a plea for the members of the community to view things the way that he does. He believes that he needs no letter of recommendation (because he has one in the form of the community), whereas the Corinthians believe that he does (as 3:1 suggests). Likewise, when Paul tells the community in 6:11

that his heart is open to them, it is clear that there is doubt in his mind that the community reciprocates his feelings; in the very next verse, the apostle insists to the Corinthians that, “there is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours.”

Even if one were to insist that the few apologetic moments in 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16 are sufficient to tie the sections together, it should be noted that the issues about which Paul is defensive in 1:17–2:1 and in 2:2–4 are different than the issues that emerge in 2:14–7:4. In the former, Paul is defensive about the changes that he has made in his travel plans (1:7–2:1) and about the necessity of composing a letter that has caused the community pain (2:2–4, cf. 7:8). In the latter, however, as we will see more clearly in the chapters that follow, the apostle defends himself against his perceived lack of openness, the suspicions that he is defrauding the community, and the attacks on his poor physical presence.⁷⁶ There is nothing at all about changes in travel plans or a tearful letter. This dissimilarity by itself suggests that different situations lie behind each text and would, in turn, point to different times of composition.

No Manuscript or Patristic Evidence Supports the Separation of 2:14–7:4 from Its Surrounding Context

While there is no disputing the claim that manuscript evidence gives no indication of 2 Corinthians as a composite letter, nevertheless, such a claim, by itself, is hardly compelling.⁷⁷ The most likely moment for a redactor to have constructed canonical 2 Corinthians from various fragments would have been the time when Paul’s letters were collected and circulated.⁷⁸ Although we cannot be sure when Paul’s letters were collected, we know that at least some of his writings were in circulation by the end of the first century.⁷⁹ Consequently, the most likely time for the redacting of 2 Corinthians would have been before the end of that century or shortly after the beginning of the second. Since we have no manuscripts of 2 Corinthians from such an early time, textual

⁷⁶ See below, chapter 3.

⁷⁷ It is worth noting that Martin raises this objection even though he himself postulates that chapters 1–9 and 10–13 should probably be separated (2 *Corinthians*, xlv–xlvi). Of course, no textual evidence exists for that division either! Note Furnish’s more balanced comments about the lack of manuscript evidence (*II Corinthians*, 36).

⁷⁸ Cf. Bornkamm, “Vorgeschichte,” 187–90.

⁷⁹ We know, for example, that Clement of Rome and Ignatius know at least some of Paul’s letters.

evidence challenging the integrity of canonical 2 Corinthians is clearly beyond our grasp.⁸⁰

The same would hold true for other evidence, in particular, evidence from Christian writings of the late first and early second centuries. Who are the earliest Christian writers who give evidence of knowing 2 Corinthians and do they give any evidence germane to the question of the canonical letter's integrity? While some scholars have claimed to see allusions to 2 Corinthians in 1 Clement, 1 Timothy, and/or Ignatius, all of these alleged allusions are impossible to affirm. Even those sympathetic to the idea that one or more of these writers knew 2 Corinthians generally acknowledge that the evidence is inconclusive.⁸¹ While it is much more likely that Polycarp knew and alluded to 2 Corinthians in his *Phil.* 2:2 and 6:2), nevertheless the claimed allusions only point to 2 Cor 4:14 and 5:10. As a result, they give no evidence either for or against the integrity of 2 Corinthians. This is because all who would argue for the division of the letter in one way or another would agree that 2 Cor 4:14 and 5:10 would be in the same letter. Polycarp, we would have to conclude, could have had access to what we know as canonical 2 Corinthians, or he could have had access to one of the letters that was later redacted (with others) into what became canonical 2 Corinthians.⁸²

Conclusion

Ultimately, the objections raised against separating 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 from its surrounding context are not persuasive, either individually or taken together. The verbal links between 7:4 and the verses that follow do not satisfactorily demonstrate a continuation of 2:14–7:4 into the section that follows (7:5–16). Rather, they argue for disjunction. The various attempts to explain away the break between 2:13 and 2:14 have also been unsuccessful. While criticism of the previously overdrawn contrast in tone between 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16 and 2:14–7:4 has some merit, nevertheless, differences between the sections are still apparent, not just in tone, but also regarding the concerns about which Paul defends himself. Finally, manuscript evidence and evidence from early Christian

80 The oldest manuscript of 2 Corinthians that we have (P⁴⁶) comes from the beginning of the third century.

81 E.g., Donald Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testament in Clement of Rome*, NOVTSup 34 (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 213.

82 It is not until Marcion, writing in the mid-second century, that we have convincing evidence that 2 Corinthians was widely known. For more on early allusions to 2 Corinthians, see Plummer, *Second Epistle*, xi–xii; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 29–30; and Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 2–3.

writers provide no significant information about the original configuration of the canonical letter.

Current Hypotheses about the Division of 2 Corinthians

Despite the dizzying array of opinions expressed above, there are currently only a relatively limited number of opinions regarding the original disposition of canonical 2 Corinthians. Some scholars still insist on the integrity of the canonical letter.⁸³ Overall, however, their arguments have not persuasively answered the various challenges outlined in the pages above. Nevertheless, as we have seen, among those who view 2 Corinthians as a composite document, no consensus exists on the proper the division of the canonical letter.⁸⁴ Currently, three major hypotheses hold sway.⁸⁵ Of these, two have already been discussed at some length and so, they will only be briefly summarized. The third has been alluded to at times but not discussed in any detail. Consequently, we will examine it more thoroughly. Following that, we will critique the various proposals.

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- 83 E.g., W.G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. Howard Clark Kee (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 291–92; Reimund Bieringer, “Plädoyer für die Einheitlichkeit Des 2. Korintherbriefes; Literarkritische und Inhaltliche Argumente,” in *Studies on 2 Corinthians*, ed. Reimund Bieringer and Jan Lambrecht (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994), 131–79; Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NTCNT (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997); Jan Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999); Jerry McCant, *2 Corinthians* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); David Garland, *2 Corinthians: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, NAC 29 (Nashville: B. & H. Publishing Group, 2000); Frank J. Matera, *II Corinthians: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003); Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005); Vegge, *2 Corinthians*. While some recent studies have argued for the integrity of the letter based on the conventions of Greco-Roman rhetoric, other appeals to rhetoric have been used to argue for the division of the letter. On this, see Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 10–13 and Calvin J. Roetzel, “2 Corinthians,” in *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament*, ed. David E. Aune (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 438.
- 84 However, it is fair to say that there is consensus that chapters 10–13 constitute a separate letter from the one (Barrett, Bruce, Furnish et al.), two (Thrall), three (Taylor), or four (Bornkamm, Georgi, Betz, Mitchell et al.) that make up chapters 1–9.
- 85 While there are other theories—such as those of Walter Schmithals (“Die Korintherbriefe als Briefsammlung,” *ZNW* 64 [1973]: 263–88) or Taylor (“Composition and Chronology”)—for the purpose of this study we will focus on those that have found the most support. For more on the other hypotheses, see below, note 95.

The first hypothesis insists that 2 Corinthians is made up of two letters, one contained in chapters 1–9 and the other in chapters 10–13. As we have already seen, there are two different variations of this hypothesis. The first assumes chapters 10–13 to be chronologically prior to chapters 1–9, as suggested by Hausrath, Kennedy, and more recently, Watson. The second variation of the two-letter hypothesis, endorsed by Barrett, Bruce, and Furnish, proposes that the chronology be reversed.

The second hypothesis argues for three letters in canonical 2 Corinthians. According to this hypothesis, chapters 1–8 represents the first letter, chapter 9 constitutes the second, and chapters 10–13 comprise the final letter. This hypothesis (with some variation) was originally put forward by Semler in the eighteenth century; it has been promoted recently by Thrall.⁸⁶ Obviously, it bears a close resemblance to the second iteration of the two-letter hypothesis (2 Corinthians 1–9 as the first letter followed by 10–13).

The third hypothesis postulates five letters and one fragment underlying canonical 2 Corinthians. It was introduced by Günther Bornkamm in 1971.⁸⁷ Bornkamm, like Hausrath and Kennedy before him, identified chapters 10–13 with Paul's painful letter. However, unlike those earlier scholars, he did not view chapters 1–9 as only one letter. Rather, he perceived in those nine chapters either three or four independent letters. Like Halmel and Weiss, Bornkamm understood 2:14–7:4 to be out of place, interrupting a text to which it did not originally belong (1:1–2:13; 7:5–16). For Bornkamm, as for Weiss, the latter (1:1–2:13; 7:5–16) represented a late composition, written after the resolution of the Corinthian crisis. Bornkamm understood the apology of 2:14–7:4 (excluding 6:14–7:1)⁸⁸ to be an independent letter, written earlier than the apology in chapters 10–13.⁸⁹

As mentioned above, Bornkamm proposed the possibility that chapter 8 represented an independent letter (although, he also thought that it might have been the conclusion or an addendum to 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16) and he suggested a late date for it, following the resolution of the crisis.⁹⁰ He also, like Windisch before him, viewed chapter 9 as an independent letter that had originally been

86 Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 57, 61.

87 Bornkamm, "Vorgeschichte".

88 While Bornkamm suggests that 6:14–7:1 was a non-Pauline fragment, he says very little beyond that ("Vorgeschichte," 187).

89 Bornkamm, "Vorgeschichte," 176–77 (although Bornkamm also acknowledged the possibility that chapter 8 was appended to 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16).

90 Bornkamm, "Vorgeschichte," 186. It should be noted that scholars who later took up Bornkamm's hypothesis on the whole assumed that chapter 8 represented an independent

sent not to Corinth but rather to the smaller communities of the Achaian province.⁹¹

In sum, Bornkamm postulated the possibility that five letters and one non-Pauline fragment (6:14–7:1) made up canonical 2 Corinthians. Of those various letters, he classified two as apologies (2:14–7:4 and chapters 10–13), at least one and possibly two as collection letters (chapters 9 and chapter 8, assuming the latter represents a separate letter), and he classified the remaining letter (1:1–2:13; 7:5–16 [and possibly chapter 8 as well]) a letter of reconciliation. He understood the correspondence to have been sent in following order:⁹²

- 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 (excluding 6:14–7:1);
- 2 Corinthians 10–13, (identified with Paul's painful letter);
- 2 Cor 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16;
- [– 2 Corinthians 8, possibly an independent letter (or possibly the conclusion to 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16)];
- 2 Corinthians 9, a circular collection letter sent to the communities of Achaia but not to Corinth.

Furthermore, Bornkamm placed an interim visit between the first and second apologies (i.e., between 2:14–7:4 and chapters 10–13).⁹³ Bornkamm's hypothesis was taken up by a number of important scholars who followed, including Dieter Georgi, Helmut Koester, and Hans Dieter Betz. These scholars, however, did not hesitate about the status of chapter 8. They all believed it to be an independent letter.⁹⁴

Critique of the Various Hypotheses

The three different hypotheses mentioned above (not including the hypothesis that 2 Corinthians is a unity) can be listed as follows:

- 1) Two letters (two variations of this hypothesis):

letter rather than the conclusion to 1:1–2:13; 7:2–4. Among those, see, for example, Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, 59–79; and Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 141–44.

91 Bornkamm, "Vorgeschichte," 187.

92 Bornkamm, "Vorgeschichte".

93 Bornkamm, "Vorgeschichte," 174–75.

94 Georgi, *Opponents*, 17–18; Koester, *Introduction*, 2:126–30; Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*.

- a) Chapters 10–13 followed by chapters 1–9 (Hausrath; Kennedy; and Watson);
- b) Chapters 1–9 followed by chapters 10–13 (Barrett; Bruce; and Furnish);
- 2) Three letters: chapters 1–8 followed by chapter 9 followed by chapters 10–13 (Semler and Thrall);
- 3) Five letters and a non-Pauline fragment: 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 (minus 6:14–7:1); chapters 10–13; 1:1–2:13 and 7:5–16; chapter 8; and 9, with chapter 9 being sent to the churches of Achaia (Bornkamm; Georgi; Koester; and Betz).⁹⁵

Each of these hypotheses has its own strengths and weaknesses.

The first variation of the two-letter hypothesis (chapters 10–13 followed by chapters 1–9) has three major strengths. First, it solves the problem of the apparent incompatibility of chapters 1–9 and chapters 10–13. While important, this strength is nevertheless shared by all of the hypotheses under consideration. The second strength lies in the relative simplicity of the hypothesis. It need only postulate two major crises in Corinth. The first crisis focused on factionalism and was addressed by Paul in 1 Corinthians; the second was created by the rival apostles, attested in chapters 10–13. A third strength is its ability to identify Paul's painful letter as part of the extant Corinthian correspondence (chapters 10–13).

But this variation of the two-letter hypothesis also has some significant weaknesses. For instance, it cannot adequately account for Paul's more conciliatory stance toward the Corinthians in some parts of the first 9 chapters (1:1–2:13 and 7:5–16, chapter 8, and chapter 9) versus his apologetic posture in others (2:14–7:4) or the fact that Paul seems intent on defending himself against different accusations in 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16 than in 2:14–7:4. Neither can it satisfactorily explain the abrupt breaks that follow 2:13 and 7:4. Nor can it account for repetition found in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it cannot adequately explain how the past visit of Titus and

95 There are also several variations of the five-letter hypothesis. Schmithals sees within 2 Corinthians six letters or letter fragments in the following order: 1) 6:14–7:1; 2) 2:14–6:2; 3) 6:3–13; 7:2–4; 4) chapters 10–13; 5) chapter 9; 6) 1:1–2:13; 7:5–8:24 (“Die Korintherbriefe”). Taylor proposes five letters or fragments, 1) 6:14–7:1; 2) chapters 10–13; 3) 2:14–6:13; 7:2–4; 4) 1:1–2:13; 7:5–8:24; 5) chapter 9 (“Composition and Chronology”). Mitchell follows Bornkamm's division of the letter but she argues that chapter 8 is the earliest (“Corinthian Correspondence” and “Paul's Letters”). Eve-Marie Becker postulates five letters in the following order: 1) 1:1–7:4; 2) 7:5–16; 3) chapter 8; 4) chapter 9; 5) Chapters 10–13 (*Letter Hermeneutics in 2 Corinthians: Studies in Literarkritik and Communication Theory*, JSNTSup 279 [London: T & T Clark, 2004]).

the unnamed “brother”—spoken of in 12:17–18—could have taken place before 8:16–18—a passage that indicates that Titus and the brother had not yet been to Corinth.⁹⁶

Like its variant, the second two-letter hypothesis (chapter 1–9 followed by chapters 10–13) also exhibits both strengths and weaknesses. Its major advantage over the variant described above is that it places 8:16–17 before 12:17–18 and thereby solves the chronological problem inherent in the Hausrath/Kennedy/Watson hypothesis. However, it shares some of the weaknesses of its variant. It cannot, for example, explain Paul’s sometimes apologetic, sometimes conciliatory stance toward the community in the first nine chapters (or the difference in issues between 1:1–2:13; 7:5–16 versus 2:14–7:4). Neither can it make sense of the two breaks in Paul’s argument after 2:13 and 7:4 nor explain how chapters 8 and 9 could be part of the same letter. But, an additional problem with this version of the two-letter hypothesis is that it cannot account for Paul’s painful letter within the extant Corinthian correspondence. Instead, it must suppose that the letter is lost. This version of the two-letter hypothesis, however, has a further and more significant weakness. It presupposes a particularly complicated relationship between Paul and the Corinthians, a relationship that included no fewer than three crises.⁹⁷ The first crisis was, of course, that of factionalism dealt with by Paul in 1 Corinthians. The second crisis is presupposed by 2 Cor 1:23–2:10 and 7:6–13, passages that suggest past tension between Paul and the community. Those same verses also presuppose some kind of resolution to the crisis (cf. 7:6–12), at least in the minds of Titus and Paul. This means that the final four chapters of 2 Corinthians address yet another emergency. Of course, it is possible that the final crisis mentioned was not a new problem but rather the flaring up of one thought to have been resolved previously (cf. 7:6–12). If the latter is assumed to be the case, the number of crises is reduced by one but another problem emerges and that is the inability of Titus to assess accurately the apostle’s relationship with the community.⁹⁸

The three-letter hypothesis (chapters 1–8, followed by chapter 9, followed in turn by 10–13), shares most of the strengths and weaknesses of the second two-letter hypothesis. Its weaknesses include the necessary assumption of three crises, the inability to adequately make sense of the breaks between 2:14 and 7:5, and the further inability to explain Paul’s conciliatory posture in some places in the earlier chapters (1:1–2:13; 7:5–16) and his apologetic stance in

96 The explanation that the visits mentioned in chapters 8 and 12 are not the same, is not persuasive (e. g., Watson, “2 Cor X–XIII,” 332–35).

97 Watson, “2 Cor X–XIII,” 332.

98 Watson, “2 Cor X–XIII,” 332.

others (2:14–7:4). It likewise shares the same strengths as the second two-letter hypothesis: first, it resolves problems that are inherent when one assumes that chapters 1–9 and chapters 10–13 are part of the same letter and, second, it solves the chronological problem of 8:16–17 and 12:17–18. However, its advantage over the second two-letter hypothesis lies in its ability to resolve the issue of repetition in the case of chapters 8 and 9.

The five-letter hypothesis exhibits a number of strengths but it also demonstrates a significant weakness. Like every other hypothesis discussed, it resolves the problem of the incompatibility of chapters 10–13 with the earlier nine chapters of the canonical letter. It also, like the three-letter hypothesis, eliminates the need to explain the repetition found in chapters 8 and 9. But, the five letter hypothesis has the added advantage of being able to account for the sharp breaks at 2:14 and 7:5 as well as the distinct difference in tone between 2:14–7:4 and the sections of the canonical letter surrounding it (as well as the seeming difference in issues). However, this hypothesis shares a significant weakness with the first two-letter hypothesis. If chapter 8 is assumed to be a late letter, then this hypothesis also has the chronological problem of 12:17–18 and 8:16–17. As we have already seen, the event mentioned in 12:17–18 presupposes that 8:16–17 (the visit of Titus and the brother) had already happened. Nevertheless, despite this problem, the five-letter hypothesis more successfully resolves the various problems of canonical 2 Corinthians. Furthermore, as we will see in the next chapter, by rearranging the order of the five proposed letters (according to Mitchell's chronology), this difficulty is solved.

Conclusion

Based upon the relative strength of the five-letter hypothesis, we will assume throughout this study that canonical 2 Corinthians contains the five following Pauline letters: 2:14–7:4; chapters 10–13; 11–2:13; 7:5–16; chapter 8; and chapter 9 (although not necessarily in that order). In addition, the canonical letter contains one curious fragment (6:14–7:1) that may have originally been part of an earlier Pauline letter to Corinth or it may have been a non-Pauline fragment. If we assume, as suggested by this hypothesis, that 2:14–7:4 (excluding 6:14–7:4, of course) represents an early work, then we should expect it to contain vital information about the nature of the controversy that arose between Paul and the Corinthians. Such information should help us to understand how and why Paul appealed to the figure of Moses early in that letter. In the chapter that follows, we will therefore investigate the circumstances that gave rise to Paul's earliest apology to the Corinthians (i.e., 2:14–7:4, minus 6:14–7:1).

The Origins of Paul's First Apology

Introduction

It is clear from what we have already seen that 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 (minus 6:14–7:1) is apologetic in intent and was composed by the apostle in response to attacks on his person and ministry. But, where did these attacks come from and what exactly was their focus? Had Paul been assailed by the “super-apostles” mentioned in chapters 10–13 as it is usually supposed? Or was he attacked by members of the Corinthian community? What were the particular issues that the apostle faced when he composed this letter? How were the allusions to Moses and to Exod 34:29–35 in the early part of this letter related to Paul's apologetic efforts? Was Paul forced to appeal to Exod 34:29–35 because his opponents did?

We will begin this chapter by examining various hypotheses concerning Paul's opposition, including the assumption that the opponents that he faced when he composed 2:14–7:4 were the same as those mentioned in 2 Corinthians 10–13. Following our focus on Paul's opposition, we will turn our attention to four specific issues about himself and his ministry that the apostle raises in 2:14–7:4:

- 1) Paul's practice of self-commendation;
- 2) Paul's competence or fitness for his role as envoy of the deity;
- 3) Corinthian suspicion about the apostle's honesty and integrity; and,
- 4) Paul's hardships and poor physical presence.

We will pay particular attention to the last two issues mentioned, suspicion about Paul's integrity and his poor physical presence/suffering. These two issues seem to dominate much of 2:14–7:4. The chapter will conclude with an examination of a possible relationship between these two issues.

Who Were Paul's Detractors? Some Notable Attempts to Identify Paul's Opposition

Typically, scholarly analysis of 2:14–7:4 (and in particular, 3:7–18) is based on a number of assumptions concerning Paul's opposition. First is the assumption

that the apostle faced the same opponents when he composed both 2:14–7:4 as when he wrote chapters 10–13. These opponents, it is supposed, were rival missionaries who arrived in Corinth sometime after Paul sent 1 Corinthians. Paul refers to both “false apostles” and “super-apostles” in 2 Corinthians 10–13.¹ It is furthermore often assumed that Paul alludes to those outsiders in several places in 2:14–7:4. Finally, the apostle’s appeal to Moses in 3:7–18 is often understood as a response by Paul to his rivals’ theological claims.²

Those who have assumed a link between the Moses allusions early in 2:14–7:4 and Paul’s opponents have examined those verses and others elsewhere in 2 Corinthians (particularly in chapters 10–13) in order to create a portrait of Paul’s adversaries. One particularly notable hypothesis argues that Judaizing rivals arrived in Corinth after Paul’s departure and had some success in promoting their agenda. The success that these Judaizers experienced, in turn, forced Paul to create a polemic to counter their influence. The idea that Judaizers challenged Paul in Corinth is not a new idea. It goes back at least as far as the nineteenth century scholar Ferdinand Christian Baur. Unlike most, Baur saw in Paul’s references to the “false apostles” and the “super-apostles” two different groups. The latter, Baur argued, consisted of the Jewish leadership of the Jerusalem church, while the former was composed of their envoys. These envoys presented themselves to the Corinthians as the true followers of Christ (cf. 2 Cor 10:7).

Baur viewed Paul’s question about letters of recommendation in 3:1 as the link that connected the “super-apostles” in Jerusalem to the “false apostles” in Corinth:

[2 Cor 3:1] gives, in a manner well-worthy of attention, an explanation of the entire matter in dispute between the Apostle [Paul] and his opponents, when it treats of a question of principle which from the beginning essentially divided [Paul] from the elder Apostles. Its subject matter is of ἐπιστολαὶ συστατικαί, of letters of “commendation” which certain persons (τινές as the τινές ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου—Gal 2:12, opponents of the Apostle [Paul]) had brought with them to Corinth. It can only have been sought to testify by these letters that the bearers were to be considered as real credible preachers of the Christian doctrine certified by recognized authority.... The more important the authority on which such messengers relied, and the more universally acknowledged it was, the more undoubtedly could they reckon on their reception and their influence,

1 The “false apostles” are named in 11:13 and the “super-apostles” are mentioned in 11:5 and 12:1.

2 For various opinions about the opponents, see above, ch. 1.

and from what other place could they bring with them so satisfactory a legitimation as from Jerusalem.³

As Baur understood the situation, the “false apostles” (who brought such letters from the “super-apostles” in Jerusalem) represented the Judaizers against whom Paul composed the section focused on Moses in 2 Corinthians 3.⁴

Baur’s suggestion that Paul faced Judaizers in Corinth was taken up in one form or another by a number of scholars in the twentieth century (although many of them did not see the “false apostles” and the “super-apostles” as representing different groups).⁵ For example, according to C.K. Barrett, the references to Moses and Israel in 2 Corinthians 3 were intended by the apostle to repudiate Moses’ ministry—the ministry to which Paul’s opponents appealed—as the way to salvation. Paul’s strategy was to denigrate the Torah observance that they advocated.⁶ Barrett, like many others, reads Paul’s seemingly negative depiction of Moses’ ministry in 3:7–11 (e.g., as a ministry of death) in terms of other Pauline letters. Particularly important for such arguments are the letters in which Paul argues against the effectiveness of Torah observance. For example, with regard to Paul’s description of Moses’ ministry as a “ministry of death” in 2 Cor 3:7, Barrett writes,

[Death] was not the intention of God in giving the law, but “the very commandment which was intended to produce life resulted for me in death” (Rom 7:10). This was the fault of sin (Rom 7:13), but the ultimate result

3 F.C. Baur, *Paul, The Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003), 292–93.

4 Baur, *Paul*, 288, 294–96.

5 Exceptions would be Käsemann (“Legitimität des Apostels,” 33–71); C.K. Barrett (“Paul’s Opponents in II Corinthians,” *NTS* 17 [1971]: 233–54 and *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, HNTC [New York: Harper & Row, 1973]); and Martin (2 *Corinthians*). Others who have seen the opponents as Judaizers include: Plummer, *Second Epistle*; Derk William Oostendorp, *Another Jesus: A Gospel of Jewish-Christian Superiority in II Corinthians* [Kampen: Kok, 1967]; and John J. Gunther, *St. Paul’s Opponents and Their Background: A Study of Apocalyptic and Jewish Sectarian Teachings*, NovTSup 35 [Leiden: Brill, 1973]. For a more comprehensive study of the history of the Judaizing hypothesis up until the end of the twentieth century, see Jerry L. Sumney, *Identifying Paul’s Opponents: The Question of Method in 2 Corinthians*, JSNTSup 40 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 15–42.

6 Note Barrett’s comment, “. . . Paul’s exegesis [concerning Moses and his veil] is a new Christian interpretation. . . . [It was] produced with polemical intent against a Judaizing threat” *Second Epistle*, 115).

was good, since "I through the law died to the law that I might live to God" (Gal 2:19).⁷

Barrett's comments here regarding Paul's labeling Moses' ministry a "ministry of death" are characteristic of those who see Judaizing behind those who opposed the apostle. Paul, these scholars have speculated, responded to the Judaizing of the "false apostles" by equating Torah observance with death and condemnation.

An imaginative variation of the hypothesis suggesting that Judaizers were behind the problems in 2 Corinthians was proposed by Jerome Murphy-O'Connor. Murphy-O'Connor correctly recognized that the hypothesis of Judaizing opponents could not adequately explain all the alleged allusions to Paul's rivals, particularly as those rivals are described in chapters 10–13 and so, as a result, he proposed that Paul waged a two front war in Corinth. As Murphy O'Connor describes the situation, Paul had founded the churches in Asia Minor and Greece as an agent of the Antioch church, the church from which he had withdrawn following the incident reported in Gal 2:11–14. Judaizers from Antioch later arrived at these churches and attempted to bring them into line with Antioch's Judaized vision of the church.⁸ So, on the one hand, Paul faced Judaizers who had come from Antioch but, on the other hand, he also opposed "spirit-people," Murphy O'Connor's label for the followers of Apollos that Paul had earlier combatted in 1 Corinthians.⁹

The spirit-people had been brutally and publicly humiliated by 1 Corinthians. Naturally their pride sought revenge. Had Apollos remained in Corinth, they might have formed an alternative church, but he had left them to join Paul and apparently was not particularly interested in returning (1 Cor 16:12). Such betrayal, for which they might have blamed Paul, could only have intensified their bitterness. In this frame of mind, they would have been fair game for any of the apostle's opponents. [An alliance between the Judaizers and the spirit-people], in consequence, was one in which both parties gained something. The Judaizers found a welcome among the élite of the Corinthian community, and the

⁷ Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 115; cf. Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 87.

⁸ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 193–94.

⁹ Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 280–84.

spirit-people were given the means of damaging, if not destroying, Paul's achievement.¹⁰

Murphy-O'Connor further suggested that the Judaizers, in order to cement their alliance with the spirit-people, made the concession of presenting themselves in a manner that would appeal to Paul's local opposition. They boasted about their credentials (cf. 2 Cor 4:5; 10:12), they spoke of their visions and revelations (12:1), they stressed their ability to perform miracles (12:12), and they adopted the conventions of Hellenistic rhetoric, all in order to enhance their attractiveness to the spirit-people.¹¹

Unfortunately, despite the various claims made about Judaizing in Corinth, no substantive evidence exists anywhere in the Corinthian correspondence to support such activity on the part of Paul's opponents. Although, in 11:22, Paul does indeed report that his rivals claim to be "Hebrews," "Israelites," and "descendants of Abraham," nowhere does he indicate that his rivals promoted anything like circumcision, *kashrut*, or Sabbath observance—issues normally equated with Judaizing.¹² Instead, the "Judaism" aspect of the controversy, as evidenced by 11:22, seems to have centered exclusively on the boast of Paul's rivals about their Jewish credentials.¹³ So, despite the fact that Paul obviously reacts to *Jewish* apostolic rivals in 2 Corinthians 10–13, the suggestion that *Judaizing* was the issue over which Paul and his opponents struggled cannot be sustained.¹⁴

Other scholars acknowledged the Jewish identity of Paul's opponents but they suggested that another issue was at the heart of the controversy. Most notably, Dieter Georgi proposed that Paul's rivals were Hellenistic Jewish wonder-workers. He suggested that these individuals promoted Moses as a

10 Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 303.

11 Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 293–314.

12 Gerhard Friedrich, "Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief," in *Abraham unser Vater: Juden und Christen im Gespräch über die Bibel*, ed. O. Betz, M. Hengel, and P. Schmidt, AGJU 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1963), 192–93.

13 Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians*, AB 32A (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984), 534.

14 Murphy-O'Connor deserves credit for taking seriously the possibility that the problems behind 2 Corinthians might in some way be linked to the effects that 1 Corinthians had on the community. We will address this issue further below. Unfortunately, however, like others who promoted the Judaizing hypothesis before him, Murphy-O'Connor can provide no solid textual evidence from 2 Corinthians to support the claim that Judaizers were in Corinth.

θεῖος ἀνὴρ (“divine man”) figure and they in turn emulated him as θεῖοι ἄνδρες.¹⁵ Georgi made sense of 2 Cor 3:7–18, with its allusions to Exod 34:29–35, by suggesting that Paul’s opponents focused on that particular scriptural text because it depicted the “divinization” of Moses. While Moses was able to fully experience the deity, his veil kept Israel from the true experience of God:

The discussion in 2 Corinthians 3 shows that the example of Moses in the pericope Exod 34:29–35 was [the opponents’] basic point of reference. Apparently the veil was understood just as much as the stone tablets as an essential mark of the Mosaic ministry. . . . [The] veil would have prevented the Israelites from “seeing the goal” [mentioned in 3:13]. This “goal” could only have been the perfection of the Mosaic experience of God, namely, turning to the Lord, as mentioned later [in 3:16], which caused the veil to disappear, the further process of transfiguration. The covering would thus be the barrier between the complete experience of God as achieved by the perfect θεῖος ἀνὴρ and the experience of others. . . . [The veil] has a pedagogical function and points to the richness and power of its bearer, but it also distinguishes the recipients. The veil becomes a sign of glory especially because it hints at whom and what it conceals and the goal this leads to. The pedagogical help stimulates the people to follow the exemplary leader and to participate in his power and his experience.¹⁶

According to Georgi therefore, the “super-apostles” (named in 2 Cor 11:5 and 12:11), claimed, like Moses, to have looked upon the “glory of the Lord” with unveiled faces. Furthermore, their mystical experience was accompanied by rhetorical and exegetical skill as well as the ability to perform wondrous deeds.

When Paul wrote of Moses in 2 Corinthians 3, so Georgi argued, his intent was to undercut the claims of these “super-apostles” by using their own text to devalue the lawgiver’s ministry. So, while the “super-apostles” spoke of the extraordinary δόξα (“glory”) of Moses’ ministry, Paul’s edits to their text redefined that ministry as a ministry of death (3:7) and condemnation (3:9). Furthermore, Paul added the participial modifier τὴν καταργουμένην (“that was being rendered ineffective”) to the term δόξα (“glory”) in order to characterize

15 Georgi originally made this proposal in his doctoral dissertation in 1957. He then published it in 1964 as *Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief: Studien zur Religiösen Propaganda in der Spätantike* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964). It was later translated into English as *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986).

16 Georgi, *Opponents*, 261–62.

Moses' ministry as part of the old, transitory past.¹⁷ Georgi's hypothesis was to prove extraordinarily influential on both sides of the Atlantic in the latter half of the twentieth century. However, although it was imaginative, it was also highly speculative and as a result its unsupportable assumptions ultimately undercut its value.¹⁸

More recently, Thrall proposed that Paul's opposition in Corinth consisted of Jews who were *not* followers of Jesus.¹⁹ Instead, Paul's opposition came from the Corinthian synagogue. Reacting against hypotheses that presume that the apostle's rivals arose from the ranks of Jesus followers, Thrall interprets 2 Cor 3:7–11 quite differently than those surveyed above:

... the natural way of reading [2 Cor] 3:7–11 is to see it as a comparison and contrast between non-Christian Judaism and Christianity (both Jewish and gentile). The idea that it is two differing forms of the Christian mission that are opposed to each other is read into the text, not out of it. If Paul is reacting to criticism, it must come originally from non-Christian Jews who have compared him to his disadvantage with the glorious figure of Moses, and drawn the conclusion that his alleged new covenant must be totally unauthentic, since he lacks the splendor of the mediator of the Sinai-covenant. If this was being said by Corinthian Jews, it may have begun to worry the Jewish members of the church, who may have seen it, on reflection, as casting doubts on Paul's message.²⁰

Thrall's suggestion raises the question: why would Paul bother to respond to criticism coming from outside his community? Thrall herself recommends at the end of the passage cited above that Paul may have felt compelled to do so because such criticism could have raised doubts in the minds of the Jewish members of the Corinthian congregation.

But Thrall's reasoning here is problematic on two grounds. First (assuming that there were Jewish members of the ἐκκλησία), it is hard to imagine that

17 Georgi, *Opponents*, 264–71.

18 In addition to the hypotheses that Paul's opponents were Judaizers or "divine men," there have also been suggestions that they were Gnostics or pneumatics. On these hypotheses, see Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents*, esp. 43–48 and 63–67.

19 Where possible, I have avoided the term "Christian" since it was not used by Paul and is likely anachronous.

20 Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 248. A similar suggestion is also (cautiously) proposed by Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 62. It should be noted that Thrall's reading of this passage resembles that of Windisch. However, he concluded that the text was an early Christian midrash (*zweite Korintherbrief*, 112).

anything said by the members of the Corinthian synagogue could have been more troubling to Jewish members of the ἐκκλησία than what would have been said to them previously by the (Jewish) members of their own families, not to mention their Jewish friends. Second, and more importantly, although there may have been a few Jews in the Corinthian ἐκκλησία, it is clear that the community was, for all intents and purposes, a gentile one.²¹ This is confirmed by Paul's description of the community in 1 Cor 12:2: "You know that when you were pagans (ἔθνη), you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak." Consequently, Thrall's proposal, although interesting, is ultimately not persuasive.

Although the above survey is by no means comprehensive, it is sufficiently representative to demonstrate that no adequate solution currently exists to the problem of Paul's motivation for appealing to Moses in 2 Corinthians 3. Nor do we yet understand why the apostle focuses so much of his attention on Exod 34:29–35 in that passage. Unfortunately, approaching 3:7–18 from the perspective of Pauline opponents has been unsuccessful for the simple reason that Paul does not give us enough information to make conclusive statements about the identity of his opposition. As Baur and others have shown, we cannot even be sure if the "false apostles" (11:13) are the same as the "super-apostles"

21 It is possible, although not certain, that Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater (Corinthians mentioned by Paul in Rom 16:21) were Jews since Paul calls them συγγενεῖς. However, they could also have been fellow Tarsians or Cilicians (see Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 2d ed. [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003], 216, n. 29). Crispus, mentioned in 1 Cor 1:14 is described as an ἀρχισυνάγωγος in Acts 18:8 and 17 (assuming of course that Luke has reliable sources both for the episode in which Crispus is mentioned and for Crispus' title). Although Crispus' Jewishness is widely assumed, inscriptional evidence calls that into question. Such evidence shows that the title ἀρχισυνάγωγος was honorific, used to reward those who had made significant contributions to the synagogue. Since it was honorific, it is possible that it could have been bestowed on "god-fearers." Note the comment by Tessa Rajak and David Noy: "It is conceivable, indeed, that you did not have to be Jewish to be an *archisynagogos*. It may have been enough to take a patronal interest in a Jewish community. Such may be the case with at least one of the refurbishers of Julia Severa's synagogue in Akmonia, those men who were honoured for their improvements to the original building. . . . It has been noted that P. Tyrronius Cladus, the *archisynagogos* for life, has the same nomen as prominent pagans in Akmonia: a C. Tyrronius Rapon had been high priest together with Julia Severa. And Julia Severa herself, though a high priestess in the imperial cult and a very grand lady, had seen fit to build a synagogue or at least to donate a house to the Jews" ("*Archisynagogoi*: Office, Title and Social Status in the Greco-Jewish Synagogue," *JRS* 83 [1993]: 88).

mentioned just a few verses earlier (11:5).²² Does Paul refer here to one group or two?

But besides the scarcity of evidence, another problem that accompanies any attempt to identify Paul's opposition has to do with timing. Many scholarly depictions of Paul's opponents (including those summarized above) combine elements from both 2 Corinthians 10–13 and 2:14–7:4. However, since 2 Corinthians 10–13 almost certainly represents a letter written *after* 2:14–7:4, we cannot be sure that Paul faced the same situation when he composed the two documents. Indeed, such a supposition seems unlikely. We must therefore ask if there is any evidence to show that the apostolic rivals of chapters 10–13 (i.e., the “false apostles”) were in Corinth when Paul wrote 2:14–7:4.

Are There References to the “False Apostles” in 2 Cor 2:14–7:4?

As mentioned above, it is usually assumed that the opponents referred to in chapters 10–13 were also on the scene when Paul wrote 2:14–7:4. In fact, this assumption is so firmly held that three particular verses from the earlier text, specifically 2 Cor 2:17; 3:1; and 5:12, are frequently cited as references to the opponents mentioned in the later letter. Furnish's comments on these particular verses are worth quoting in full because they reflect the assumptions of many:

From [2 Cor 2:17; 3:1, and 5:12] one learns that the Corinthians are familiar with “some” who have come to their city with letters of recommendation and who, Paul presumes, would expect such letters from the Corinthians (3:1); that these people are “boasting of what is outward and not of what is within” and that in so doing they have sought to diminish Paul's stature in the eyes of the congregation (5:12). These points correspond closely enough with the profile of the opponents which emerges from the explicit references to them in [2 Corinthians 10–13] (e.g., 10:12; 11:18; and 10:7, 10–11) that one may safely conclude that Paul is thinking of the same people in both letters. Once this is recognized, the reference in 2:17 to “so many huckstering the word of God” is readily seen as a further description of those who have come to Corinth preaching “another gospel” (11:4), and Paul's comment about his own “pure motives” in preaching

22 Cf. Mitchell, “Paul's Letters,” 315.

(2:17) can be understood as an allusion to the impure motives of his rivals (cf. 11:12–15, 20).²³

While Furnish's words may seem tenable at first glance, a closer look demonstrates just how unimpressive is the "evidence" presented by these three verses. It consists of only the terms, "many" (οἱ πολλοί) in 2:17 ("For we are not peddlers of God's word like so many [οἱ πολλοί]), "some" (τινες) in 3:1 ("Surely we do not need, as some [τινες] do, letters of recommendation . . . , do we?"), and "boasters" (οἱ καυχώμενοι) in 5:12 ("those who boast [οἱ καυχώμενοι] in outward appearance"). Can we indeed (as does Furnish) "safely conclude" that "Paul is thinking of the same people" in 2:17; 3:1; and 5:12 as those that he opposes in chapters 10–13?²⁴ Let us examine each of these three verses. We will begin with 5:12 for that verse seems to be the most likely to share a connection with what we see in chapters 10–13.

2 Cor 5:12

There is no denying that in 5:12 Paul addresses opposition in Corinth—opposition for whom the apostle here supplies his supporters with an (ἄφορμή) "opportunity" to boast about him. There is, however, no compelling reason to assume that the opposition in question is necessarily the same opposition that appears in 2 Corinthians 10–13 (i.e., the "false apostles"/"super-apostles").²⁵ The connection is usually made because Paul, in 5:12, describes his opposition as made up of "those who boast in outward appearance and not in the heart." In 11:12–13, the apostle similarly appears to attack the "false apostles" in connection with the issue of boasting:

¹² And what I do I will also continue to do, in order to deny an opportunity to those who want an opportunity to be recognized as our equals in what they boast about. ¹³ For such boasters are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

23 Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 50–51. See also, among others, Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 103–4, 106–7, 165–66; Georgi, *Opponents*, *passim*; Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 70, 148; Jerry L. Sumney, "Servants of Satan": "False Brothers" and Other Opponents of Paul, JSNTSup 188 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 82–85.

24 As Watson has shown us, it is also not clear that all the passages in 2 Corinthians 10–13 that are usually used to construct a portrait of Paul's opponents are focused on Paul's apostolic rivals from elsewhere. Some may refer to "the wrongdoer" mentioned in 2 Cor 7:12. See Watson, "2 Cor X–XIII," 345–46 summarized above in ch. 2.

25 Although we cannot know for sure, I will for now, like Furnish, assume that the labels "false apostles" and "super-apostles" refer to the same group.

But how secure is the connection between the boasters in 5:12 and in 11:12–13? Nowhere in 5:12 does Paul attribute such boasting to *apostolic* rivals. Nor in this verse does he mention opponents from elsewhere. Consequently, before we assume that the boasters are identical in each letter, we must ask if we encounter the issue of boasting elsewhere in the Corinthian correspondence.

Indeed, a quick look at 1 Corinthians shows us that a great many of the problems addressed by Paul in that letter had to do with boasting in one form or another. In 1 Cor 1:29–30, for example, Paul reprimands the Corinthians for boasting about their own social standing. In 3:21, he admonishes them for boasting about their leaders. In 4:18–19, he chastises them for their arrogance. In 5:2; 5:6; and 8:1, he chides them for boasting of their freedom. Chapters 12 and 14 indicate that boasting by some in their spiritual abilities (particularly *glossalia*) has caused dissension in the assembly. In chapter 13 (and particularly 13:3–4), Paul promotes love in place of such boasting and arrogance.

In light of Paul's continual opposition to the Corinthian's boasting throughout 1 Corinthians, it seems clear that boasting was not just an issue underlying 2:14–7:4 and chapter 10–13. Therefore, it is safe to say that it is *at least as likely* that the “boasters” mentioned in 5:12 point to members of the Corinthian community as to the apostolic rivals who appear in 2 Corinthians 10–13. While the connection between 5:12 and chapters 10–13 cannot be excluded absolutely, neither can it be affirmed with any confidence. I suggest that, unless we can find more compelling evidence of outside apostolic rivals elsewhere in 2:14–7:4, we are on safer ground if we identify the boasters of 5:12 as members of the Corinthian community. We will return to the question of boasters from within the Corinthian assembly later in this chapter. For now, we will turn to another alleged reference to the “false apostles” in 2 Cor 2:14–7:4.

2 Cor 2:17

Within the first few verses of 2:14–7:4, Paul announces:

For we are not peddlers of God's word like so many; but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God and standing in his presence.

Should this verse be understood as an indirect accusation made by Paul against his apostolic rivals, the “false apostles”/“super-apostles” as is often suggested? I contend that there is little reason to read this passage in such a manner. Indeed, there is no evidence to suggest that Paul is referring to any opponents at all in 2:17. The “many” (οἱ πολλοί) mentioned there could just as likely point to the many religious charlatans that populated the Greco-Roman landscape.

A good example of such would be the second-century Paphlagonian figure, Alexander of Abonoteichus, dubbed by the satirist Lucian, the γόης (“imposter”) of Abonoteichus.²⁶ This schemer, according to Lucian, hawked expensive prophecies to his victims with the help of a large snake—supposedly, a new incarnation of the god Asclepius—that Alexander held on his lap.²⁷ As Lucian recounts the story, the snake had been fitted with,

... a serpent's head of linen, which had something of a human look, [which] was all painted up, and ... would open and close its mouth by means of horsehairs, and a forked black tongue like a snake's, also controlled by horsehairs, would dart out.²⁸

In order to make it even more convincing, Alexander further customized the “deity” so that it spoke. He did this,

... [by fastening] cranes' windpipes together and [passing] them through the [snake's] head, which he had fashioned to be so lifelike. Then he answered the questions [put to him] through someone else, who spoke into the tube from the outside [of the sanctuary], so that the voice issued from his canvas Asclepius.²⁹

If Paul indeed meant to allude to such unsavory characters as Lucian (rather than apostolic rivals) with his reference to οἱ πολλοί in 2 Cor 2:17, then that in turn would suggest that there were questions about the apostle's honesty and integrity. As we will see, evidence appears elsewhere in 2:14–7:4 that suggests that such suspicions about Paul had indeed surfaced in the community when Paul wrote 2:14–7:4. As a result, it seems more likely that Paul's reference to οἱ πολλοί here is an attempt to distance himself from such religious frauds than it is an indirect swipe at rival apostles. We will return to this subject below.³⁰

26 Lucian, *Alexander* 1.

27 The deity promoted by Alexander was most likely Glycon. See Ramsay MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 122.

28 Lucian, *Alexander* 12.

29 Lucian, *Alexander* 26.

30 Of course, these options do not necessarily exclude one another. Paul could have been defending himself *and* attacking opponents at the same time. However, without other compelling evidence for the presence of the “false apostles”/“super-apostles” in Corinth at the time, such a suggestion is overly speculative.

For now, though, we will turn to the final passage that has been understood to point to the rival apostles of chapters 10–13.

2 Cor 3:1

In the final alleged reference to the opponents that appear in chapters 10–13 (3:1), Paul takes up the subject of letters of recommendation:

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Surely we do not need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you or from you, do we?

With these questions, Paul implicitly denies that he has need of letters of recommendation, “as some do” (ὡς τινες). As Furnish’s quotation (cited above) indicates, it is typically assumed that Paul’s rivals, the “false apostles” or “super-apostles” of chapters 10–13, had brought impressive letters of recommendation to Corinth with them and Paul had subsequently been demeaned for not possessing such letters.³¹

But, given the ubiquity of letters of recommendation in Paul’s world, there is no reason to assume that the “some” mentioned here would refer to apostolic rivals flashing impressive letters of recommendation around Corinth. Instead, the “some” could just as easily point to any individual in the ancient world arriving in a strange city with introductory letters.³² We know from Paul’s own writings that the apostle wrote such letters for others (cf. 2 Cor 8:16–24 and Rom 16:1–2) and, if Acts is to be believed, he also carried letters of recommendation that were written for him (Acts 9:1–2).³³ I suspect that the reason that scholars have connected this verse about letters of recommendation to rival

31 It is curious that, although some have had no hesitancy in claiming that Paul’s question about commending himself in 3:1a (“Are we beginning to commend ourselves again”) is about his own behavior, those very same scholars have been unwilling to consider the possibility that the apostle’s second question in 3:1b (“Surely we do not need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you or from you, do we?”) is also about him and him alone. Rather, they have been all too quick to jump to the conclusion that the reference to “some” (τινες) here, like the “many” in 2:17, must refer not to Paul but to the “false apostles” of the later letter. See, for example, C.K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, HNTC (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 106; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 192–93; and Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 50–51.

32 Cf., Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 219.

33 Although it is highly unlikely that there is any historical truth behind Luke’s account of Paul seeking letters from the chief priest (Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, Hermeneia [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009], 240–41), it hardly seems unlikely that Paul at times carried letters of recommendation. See his comment, for instance, in 2 Cor 12:11.

apostles has to do with the difficulty of explaining why Paul would have otherwise raised the issue. But as we will see in the next chapter, the passage can be explained without recourse to the “super-apostles.”

For now though, we are forced to conclude that the three so-called references to apostolic rivals in 2:14–7:4 are, by themselves, insufficient to prove that the opponents of 2 Corinthians 10–13 were in Corinth when Paul wrote 2:14–7:4. As we have seen, all of the references can be explained otherwise. We cannot therefore simply assume that the issues that gave rise to Paul's apology in 2:14–7:4 arose because of the agitation caused by these figures. But, if there is insufficient evidence to support the hypothesis that the “false-apostles” were responsible for the situation that Paul addressed in 2:14–7:4, is there then another, more compelling, possibility?

I suggest that it is more likely that, at the time that Paul composed 2:14–7:4, his opposition came from *within* the Corinthian community. I will attempt to support this hypothesis by looking at the community from a time shortly before the writing of 1 Corinthians up until the composition of 2:14–7:4. Although there are certainly great gaps in our knowledge, nevertheless, the Corinthian correspondence can provide us with sufficient information to create a reasonable narrative of events leading to the composition of 2:14–7:4. Of course, inferences will have to be made due to the gaps in the evidence. Nevertheless, I will attempt to avoid undue speculation.

Internal Opposition? 1 Corinthians: Its Cause and Likely Effect

At some point after he had left Corinth following the founding of the ἐκκλησία there, Paul received disturbing news about factions from “Chloe's people.”³⁴

^{1:10} Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you should be in agreement and that there should be no divisions among you, but that you should be united in the same mind and the same purpose. ¹¹ For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. ¹² What I mean is that each of you says, ‘I belong to Paul’, or ‘I belong to Apollos’, or ‘I belong

34 Although, as we saw in chapter 2 above, we know that Paul wrote to the community prior to 1 Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor 5:9) and that the community wrote to him as well (e.g., 1 Cor 7:1), we will not here address these earlier letters.

to Cephas', or 'I belong to Christ.' ¹³ Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?³⁵

In response to this information, the apostle composed the letter that we now know as 1 Corinthians. As the first sentence in this passage indicates so clearly (1 Cor 1:10), Paul wrote 1 Corinthians as a call for unity. Overall, his strategy was to encourage concord within the community by proposing that the Corinthians put aside their individual interests for the good of the larger community. In other words, throughout his letter, Paul insists on selflessness and love as the solution to the divisions within the community.³⁶

In a number of places throughout the letter, Paul set himself up as an example of appropriate, selfless behavior and he encouraged the Corinthians, implicitly or explicitly, to emulate him.³⁷ For instance, in the midst of his discussion of meat sacrificed to pagan gods (εἰδωλόθυτα) in chapters 8–10, he puts himself forward as an exemplar of unselfish behavior. He claims that he himself has given up his rights as an apostle—primarily the right to be supported by the community—for the sake of the gospel (cf. 9:12b, 18). He reminds the Corinthians that, rather than take money from them, he had preached to them free of charge. In turn, he implicitly suggests that the Corinthians who insist (based on their “knowledge”) that eating εἰδωλόθυτα is unobjectionable should also abdicate their “right” to eat such food so that they not inadvertently scandalize a “weaker” member of the community (cf. 1 Cor 8:9–13; 10:28–29).³⁸ We will return to Paul’s use of himself as an exemplar shortly.

In some places during Paul’s call for unity, the apostle also reproves the Corinthians for behavior that he considers inappropriate. While his language is sometimes diplomatic and conciliatory, at other times, it is harsh and unyielding. In the various examples that follow, much could easily have been construed as offensive by some in the Corinthian ἐκκλησία. For instance, Paul strongly rebukes the Corinthians in 1 Cor 5:1–13 for tolerating what he considers to be outrageous sexual immorality:

35 Cf. also 1 Cor 3:1–9.

36 For an analysis of Paul’s conciliatory language in 1 Corinthians, see Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians*, HUT 28 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1991).

37 See Mitchell, *Paul*, 49–60.

38 Specifically, their ‘right’ to eat εἰδωλόθυτα is derived from the knowledge that “no idol in the world really exists,” and that “there is no God but one” (1 Cor 8:4).

⁵¹ It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father's wife. ² And you are arrogant! Should you not rather have mourned, so that he who has done this would have been removed from among you?

In the chapter that follows (1 Corinthians 6), Paul scolds those in the community who have taken other community members to court. In the process, he calls into question the wisdom of the Corinthians (6:5), something about which the community was obviously proud:³⁹

^{6:1} When any of you has a grievance against another, do you dare to take it to court before the unrighteous, instead of taking it before the saints? ² Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? ³ Do you not know that we are to judge angels—to say nothing of ordinary matters? ⁴ If you have ordinary cases, then, do you appoint as judges those who have no standing in the church? ⁵ I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to decide between one believer and another, ⁶ but a believer goes to court against a believer—and before unbelievers at that?

A bit further along in the letter, in chapter 11, he excoriates the community for their behavior at the Lord's Supper:

¹⁷ Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse.¹⁸ For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it. ¹⁹ Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. ²⁰ When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. ²¹ For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. ²² What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!

In these passages from chapters 5, 6, and 11, Paul makes no attempt to be conciliatory. Rather, his language is forceful and uncompromising. In these

39 Cf. 1 Cor 1:18–2:16; 8:1–4; etc.

sections of the letter and others like them, Paul must have touched some nerves. And he likely irritated some of the more socially significant people in the community, particularly those who prided themselves in their superior knowledge.

But, in addition to his harsh language in some sections of the letter, Paul in other places also addresses a number of particularly divisive issues. Included among these would be the consumption of food considered by some to be defiling (1 Corinthians 8–10), the behavior of women at worship (1 Cor 11:1–16 and 14:33–40), and the proper use of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:1–31). Those in the community whose practices Paul attempted to modify—for example, those who saw nothing wrong with eating εἰδωλόθυτα (despite the objections of others in the community), women who thought they had as much a right to speak out in the community assembly as the men (over the objections of the more traditionally-minded), and those whose spiritual proficiency brought them honor (and gave rise to envy among others)—stood to lose a good deal if Paul's recommendations were accepted.⁴⁰

It is possible that some and perhaps many of the Corinthians paid attention to Paul's call for unity and made sincere efforts to overcome the divisions undermining the community. However, it would be naive to assume that everyone in the community reacted positively. Those who felt themselves harshly reprimanded were likely incensed, as were those whose practices were condemned. It is easy to see how such parties could have interpreted Paul's letter less as a call for concord than an attack on their practices and beliefs—practices that they regarded as theologically justified and beliefs that they considered well-reasoned.⁴¹ It seems that Murphy-O'Connor (cited above) certainly hit the mark with his suggestion that some in Corinth, "... had been brutally and publicly humiliated by 1 Corinthians" and that "naturally their pride sought revenge."⁴²

In the following section, we will focus on those issues that emerge in 2:14–7:4, issues to which Paul felt compelled to respond. As we will see, at least a couple of them—specifically, the issues of self-commendation and Paul's competence as a δῖάκονος of the deity—likely emerged, at least in part, from the resentment caused by 1 Corinthians. However, as will become evident, other

40 Cf. Mitchell, *Paul*, 303. Note also the comments of Barrett who suggests that after the community received 1 Corinthians, "affairs in Corinth, and the relations between the Corinthian church and the apostle deteriorated" (*First Epistle*, 5).

41 Unfortunately, our tendency to champion Paul as the defender of "orthodox" belief and practice makes it difficult for us to imagine the integrity of those in Corinth who thought differently than the apostle.

42 Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 303, cited above.

issues also surfaced in the period of time between the Corinthians' reception of 1 Corinthians and Paul's composition of 2 Cor 2:14–7:4. A brief examination of a few key passages of Paul's defense in the latter document will help us to untangle the various issues so that we can create a reasonable narrative of the situation faced by the apostle when he composed his self-defense (2:14–7:4).

Evidence for Issues of Concern in 2:14–7:4 That Likely Had Their Origin in 1 Corinthians

While Paul may not have intended 1 Corinthians as an attack on members of the Corinthian community, some most likely took it that way. As a result, they likely responded with pointed questions of their own, questions aimed at the apostle. These focused, first, on Paul's perceived "fitness" for his role as a *διάκονος* ("envoy") of the deity and, second, on what was seen as his practice of self-commendation. Although other issues also surfaced, their relationship to 1 Corinthians (if at all) is not immediately apparent. Rather, they may have arisen during the time between the Corinthian reception of 1 Corinthians and the apostle's composition of 2:14–7:4. We will look first at the former set of issues: Paul's fitness and his self-commendation. We will then turn to other issues—issues that seem, at least on the surface, unrelated to the Corinthian reaction to 1 Corinthians.

Questions about Paul's "Fitness"

In the early verses of 2:14–7:4, specifically from 2:16–3:6, Paul focuses on his "fitness" for his role, using the three related terms: *ἱκανός* ("fit," "competent," or "qualified"), *ἱκανότης* ("fitness," "competence," or "qualification"), or *ἱκανώω* ("to make fit," "to make competent," or "to make qualified"). Ultimately, Paul concludes his discussion with the claim that, "[God] has made us fit (*ἱκάνωσεν*) to be ministers of a new covenant."⁴³ Although Paul confines his use of these three terms to 2:16–3:6, nevertheless, there is no question that the entirety of 2:14–7:4 addresses concerns about his fitness for his role as a *διάκονος* of the deity.

Where would such questions about Paul's fitness have come from? Although some scholars have argued that the issue and the terminology originated with

43 The NRSV uses "sufficient" for *ἱκανός*. But, as we will see, given the context of 2 Corinthians, I suggest "competent," "fit," or "qualified" are more appropriate. It is worth noting that the NRSV uses "competence" for *ἱκανότης* and "to make competent" for *ἱκανώω* in 3:5 and 6 respectively. See also BAGD, s. ν.

Paul's apostolic rivals, we have already seen that no persuasive evidence exists for their presence in Corinth at the time that Paul wrote 2 Cor 2:14–7:4.⁴⁴ Ronald Hock's work has produced a more plausible explanation. Hock suggests that Paul's status likely contributed to his difficulties with the community. In other words, it is quite possible that, in the wake of 1 Corinthians, some of Paul's critics decided that they were unwilling to accept advice from a manual laborer.

In the social world of a city like Corinth, Paul would have been a weak figure, without power, prestige, and privilege. We recall the shoemaker Micylus, depicted by Lucian [*Cataplus* 1.14–15, 20, 22] as penniless and powerless—poor, hungry, wearing an unsightly cloak, granted no status, and victimized. . . . To Corinthians who, relative to Paul, appeared to be rich, wise, and respected (cf. 4:8, 10), their lowly apostle had seemed to have enslaved himself with his plying a trade (cf. 9:19).⁴⁵

While the great majority of the members of the Corinthian ἐκκλησία were far from rich, nevertheless, there were certainly some in the community who must have had some financial means, at least in comparison with Paul.⁴⁶ Such people would have thought themselves not only Paul's financial betters but also his *social* superiors. For these people, particularly if they had felt humiliated by Paul's earlier letter (1 Corinthians), Paul's way of making his living while preaching the gospel—and the social and economic hardships that he endured as a result—could have easily raised questions about his fitness as a representative of the deity.

In addition to the drawbacks of Paul's low social status as a manual laborer, his unimpressive physical presence also provided ammunition for his detractors. Everything that we can determine from the correspondence in 2 Corinthians, and in particular 2:14–7:4, indicates that Paul was a physical

44 E.g., Georgi, *Opponents*, 231–34.

45 Ronald F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 60. It should be noted that Hock views 1 Corinthians 9 as a defense and the above-cited quotation serves to explain the context of that defense. Regardless of the context, however, I believe that the quotation nevertheless gives us a picture of how the Corinthians would have viewed Paul.

46 Bruce Longenecker suggests the following Corinthian individuals as having moderate resources: Erastus, Gaius, Chloe, Stephanus, and Crispus ("Socio-Economic Profiling of the First Urban Christians," in *After the First Urban Christians: The Social-Scientific Study of Pauline Christianity Twenty-Five Years Later*, ed. Todd D. Still and David G. Horrell [London: T & T Clark, 2009], 47).

wreck.⁴⁷ According to a comment found in 2 Cor 10:10—that is, in the apology that followed 2:14–7:4—one of his detractors asserted that although Paul was capable of writing impressive letters, “his bodily presence [was] weak (ἡ δὲ παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενής), and his speech contemptible (ἐξουθενήμενος).” Such would have been contrary to popular expectations, especially in light of the physiognomic assumptions of the time which dictated that a deity’s spokesperson should possess strong and noble physical characteristics.⁴⁸

Consider, for example, Alexander of Abonoteichus—Lucian’s satirical target mentioned above—who was able to defraud his victims in part because he bore the impressive physical characteristics expected of such a religious figure.⁴⁹

...he was tall and handsome in appearance, and really godlike (θεοπρεπής); his skin was fair, his beard not very thick; his long hair was in part natural, in part false, but very similar, so that most people did not detect that it was not his own. His eyes shone with a great glow of fervor and enthusiasm; his voice was at once very sweet and very clear (ἡδιστόν τε ἄμα καὶ λαμπρότατον); and in a word, no fault could be found with him in any respect as far as all that went.⁵⁰

According to Lucian, Alexander was handsome to the point of being “godlike” (θεοπρεπής). He also dressed the part. He is described, at the oracle, as “clothed in apparel well suited to a god” (μάλα θεοπρεπῶς ἐσταλμένος). Although his hair

47 As we will see below, a great deal of 2:14–7:4 focuses on Paul’s inferior physical presence, including 4:7–12; 4:16–5:10; and 6:4–10.

48 For good summaries of such physiognomic presuppositions, see Mikeal C. Parsons, *Body and Character in Luke and Acts* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2006), 11–65; On physiognomics and Paul, see Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), esp. 25–37 and J. Albert Harrill, “Invective Against Paul (2 Cor 10:10), the Physiognomics of the Ancient Slave Body, and the Greco-Roman Rhetoric of Manhood,” in *Antiquity and Humanity: Essays on Ancient Religion and Philosophy Presented to Hans Dieter Betz on His 70th Birthday*, ed. Adela Yarbro-Collins and Margaret M. Mitchell (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2001), esp. 192–209.

49 Although Lucian does not use the term δῖάκονος in relation to the charlatan, he indicates that Alexander used similar terms to describe his role, including προφήτης (“prophet”), ὑποφήτης, (“interpreter [of an oracle]”), and μαθητής τοῦ θεοῦ (“disciple of God”). The most common term is προφήτης, appearing in *Alexander*, 11, 24, 43, 55. The terms ὑποφήτης (24) and μαθητής both appear in *Alexander* 24. In addition, Alexander apparently claimed divine descent, alleging that he was related to Perseus (*Alexander* 11 and 58).

50 Lucian, *Alexander* 3.

was thinning, he was able to hide it effectively.⁵¹ From Lucian's point of view, although Alexander was anything but a true prophet, he nevertheless looked the part and, as a result, he was easily able to hoodwink the public.

Paul's poor physical appearance, to the contrary, must have contributed to any doubts that the Corinthians may have already had about both his authority and his commission. He was weak (ἀσθενής), his body was battered (2 Cor 4:7–9; 6:4), and unlike the prophet of Abonoteichus—whose voice is described by Lucian as very sweet and clear—Paul's speech was “contemptible.”⁵² Since one's physical presence was at that time usually interpreted as a manifestation of one's character, some people in Corinth would most certainly have interpreted Paul's weakness as indicative of moral failings.

In sum, it is likely that issues about Paul's fitness or competence for his role initially arose, at least in part, in reaction to his harsh admonitory language in 1 Corinthians. Some of those whom he chastised probably believed themselves to be Paul's social superiors and they responded angrily, questioning the right of one such as Paul to rebuke them. The apostle's low-status profession and his hand-to-mouth lifestyle made him an easy target as did his poor physical appearance. Since Paul hardly looked the part of a divine envoy—at least from the perspective of those upset by him—his opinions and his authority were called into question. Furthermore, it seems that Paul's poor physical state took on additional importance as the controversy heated up. We will return to this after exploring some of the other issues that emerged in the dispute.

Allegations of Self-Commendation

The issue of self-commendation arises in a number of places in 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 and Paul addresses it in a variety of ways. The issue first emerges at the beginning of chapter 3 (3:1) where the apostle introduces the subject of commendation by asking two questions, the first of which directly addresses the issue of self-commendation:⁵³

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Surely we do not need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you or from you, do we?

51 Lucian's comments about his false hair was possibly intended to point out that Alexander only looked “godlike” if one did not look too closely.

52 Note also the description of the speech of the corrupt band of Syrian priests in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* 8.26 whose voices are described as *fracta et rauca et effeminata*.

53 The second question centers on commendation by others (specifically via letters of recommendation). We will address the issue of letters of recommendation in the next chapter.

It is noteworthy that with the first question, Paul implicitly denies that he is commending himself. Curiously, he adds the term *πάλιν* to the question which suggests that he had been accused of commending himself previously (although we see no evidence of such earlier in 2:14–7:4). A bit later, in 4:4, Paul also raises the issue. In this verse, he explicitly denies that he is commending himself:

For we do not proclaim ourselves (οὐ γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς κηρύσσομεν); we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord (Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον) and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake.

Although here Paul does not use typical terms for self-commendation (*συνιστάνω* or *συνίστημι*) as he does elsewhere in the letter, nevertheless, in substance, his claim is identical.⁵⁴ He denies that he promotes himself (οὐ γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς κηρύσσομεν) and claims, to the contrary, that he proclaims, “Jesus Christ as Lord” (Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον).⁵⁵

In 5:12, a verse that we examined earlier, Paul likewise denies that he commends himself but in this verse his strategy is somewhat different:⁵⁶

We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you an opportunity to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast in outward appearance and not in the heart.

Here, although Paul explicitly denies commending himself *again* (cf. 3:1), he nevertheless admits to an act that could be interpreted as such. He suggests that what some may have understood as self-commendation really represents something else: giving an opportunity or pretext (*ἄφορμή*) to his supporters so that they may have something to use against “those who boast in outward appearance.”⁵⁷

Curiously, besides the three passages cited above where Paul denies commending himself, he openly admits to self-commendation in two other places

54 The terms *συνιστάνω*/*συνίστημι* appear in 3:1; 4:2; 5:12; and 6:4.

55 Paul's language recalls anti-sophistic rhetoric. In his oration, *De exilio*, Dio Chrysostom makes the claim, “the great majority of those styled philosophers proclaim themselves (αὐτοὺς ἀνακηρύττουσιν), just as the Olympian heralds proclaim the victors” (13.11).

56 What Paul refers to as self-commendation is not obvious. Perhaps it was his statement in 5:10 and 11 or perhaps he is referring to his whole discussion up to this point (beginning in 2:14). See Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 323–24 and Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 403.

57 Paul's redefinition of self-commendation here in some ways resembles his strategy in 4:2b and 6:4, to be discussed below. In all three places, Paul redefines self-commendation.

(4:2b and 6:4). In those places, however, he qualifies what he means. In the earlier of the two, he states:

... by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God.

In this passage, Paul admits to self-commendation (συνιστάνοντες ἑαυτοῦς) but it is “to the conscience of everyone” (πρὸς πᾶσαν συνείδησιν ἀνθρώπων) and “in the sight of God (ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ).⁵⁸ Paul thereby redefines the act of self-commendation as behaving in a way that demonstrates one’s integrity.⁵⁹ In short, the apostle insists that he has presented himself openly (τῇ φανερώσει τῆς ἀληθείας) to the community and to God and, as a result, he will be absolved by both of any wrongdoing.⁶⁰

Besides 4:2b, Paul also freely admits to self-commendation in 6:4–5, “as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way.” But in these verses, Paul recasts self-commendation even more radically (and ironically) than he had in 4:2b or 5:12. Paul’s “self-commendation” in 6:4–5 (as well as in the next five verses) make up a catalogue of hardships (6:4–10).⁶¹ His self-commendation takes the form of boasting about, among other things, his “great endurance,” his “afflictions,” his “hardships,” the “calamities” that he suffers, and so on.

58 It is notable that earlier in the same verse, Paul had claimed to have “renounced the shameful hidden things.”

59 Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 129; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 219; and Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 456.

60 Paul’s redefinition of self-commendation here resembles the assertion made by Diogenes the Cynic regarding commendation, although his focus was on a written letter of commendation by another. When asked for a letter of recommendation, Diogenes responded by insisting that there was no good reason for such: “That you are a man [the person for whom such a recommendation would be written] will know at a glance; but whether you are a good or a bad man he will discover if he has the skill to distinguish between good and bad, and if he is without that skill he will not discover the facts, even though I write him thousands of times” (Epictetus, *Diatribai* 2. 3. 1). As we can see, therefore, for both Paul and Diogenes, mere words of commendation—whether from oneself or from another—are meaningless. That which indeed commends an individual is his or her upright actions and, of course, the ability of others to distinguish between right and wrong behavior.

61 This “self-commendation” is not unlike Paul’s claim in the second apology, “If I must boast, I will boast of those things that show my weakness” (11:30). This claim follows the hardship catalogue in 11:23–27.

As we can see therefore, the subject of self-commendation runs throughout Paul's apology of 2:14–7:4. Regardless of whether the apostle denies commending himself in some places or whether he admits it but redefines the practice in others, his defensiveness regarding the issue is apparent. What could have been the cause of such defensiveness? It seems obvious, particularly since Paul speaks of commending himself *again* in two places (3:1 and 5:12), that he had been accused of self-commendation by some in the community prior to the composition of 2:14–7:4. Based on this, the most likely source for the accusation was his practice of holding himself up as a model to be imitated in 1 Corinthians.

Earlier in this chapter, we looked at one place in 1 Corinthians where Paul suggests to the Corinthians that they emulate his behavior (1 Corinthians 8–10). There are, in addition, a number of other places where he points to himself as a paradigm for proper behavior. His use of himself as a model is relatively subtle in some places (such as in the passage discussed above) but, there are other places where Paul is much more direct. For example, in chapter 7, where he discusses sexual relations and self-control, the apostle asserts, "I wish that all were as I myself am" (7:7). Likewise, in chapter 14, in his argument for the superiority of prophecy over *glossalalia*, Paul tells the Corinthians, "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you" (14:18).⁶² In other places, he is even less subtle. In 4:16, for instance, he entreats the members of the community, "I appeal to you, then, be imitators of me." Paul is just as forward in his suggestion in 11:1 that the Corinthians, "be imitators of me, as I am of Christ."⁶³

It seems likely that the above-mentioned appeals to the Corinthians to look upon him as a model of exemplary behavior were interpreted by some in the community as "self-commendation."⁶⁴ By making such statements, Paul was seen by some as praising himself. In light of the apostle's many admonitions against arrogance and boasting that appear throughout 1 Corinthians, a number of members of the community must have been genuinely appalled by

62 It is not hard to understand how a member of the congregation who was proud of his or her ability to speak in tongues would have been irritated by Paul's claim because it seems to belittle the spiritually adept Corinthian. Paul follows his claim in 14:18 with, "nevertheless, in the assembly I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue" (14:19). The argument in the two verses, taken together is meant to convey the following: "if I (Paul), who am more adept at *glossalalia* than any of you (the Corinthians) are, think that it is better to speak intelligibly in the *ἐκκλησία*, so should you."

63 In the latter verse, the apostle at least gives the Corinthians a reason why they should imitate him. They should imitate him because he imitates Christ.

64 Mitchell, *Paul*, 303; cf. also Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 192–93.

what they saw as blatant hypocrisy on the part of the apostle. We can imagine their possible response:

How does Paul have the nerve to condemn our so-called ‘arrogant’ behavior? He is the arrogant one! After all, he commends himself over and over again in that letter he sent us!

Furthermore, outrage at Paul’s seeming arrogance could only have been exacerbated by his low social status and poor physical presence. In response, throughout the apology or 2:14–7:4, Paul attempts to disarm his opposition within the community by either denying that he commends himself or by redefining self-commendation in such a way as to undermine his opponents’ accusations. We will return to this issue in the pages that follow. As we will see, while the community’s complaint about Paul’s habit of commending himself likely had its origin in 1 Corinthians, by the time that 2:14–7:4 was composed, it had grown into something bigger.

Issues of Concern in 2:14–7:4 That Seem Unrelated to 1 Corinthians

Although we see that the issues of fitness and self-commendation are not difficult to connect to the Corinthians’ response to 1 Corinthians, other issues reflected in 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 seem, at least on the surface, unrelated to that earlier letter. Nevertheless, these issues must also have arisen between the time that 1 Corinthians was delivered to Corinth and the composition of 2:14–7:4. Two of them seem to be closely related: suspicions of furtive and underhanded behavior on Paul’s part and suspicions of fraudulent behavior. We will examine the evidence for these in 2:14–7:4 and then attempt to determine their cause.

Accusations of Furtive and Cunning Behavior

In various places throughout 2:14–7:4, Paul insists that he has been open and honest with the community. The number of places in which this issue emerges suggests that the suspicions about Paul’s openness were significant. Paul, in turn, reacted to those suspicions with a degree of defensiveness. Such defensiveness is especially evident in 4:2a where he contends:

²We have renounced the shameful hidden things (τὰ κρυπτά τῆς αἰσχύνης); we refuse to practice cunning (περιπατοῦντες ἐν πανουργίᾳ) or to falsify God’s word (δολοῦντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ)

For our purposes, one of the most significant terms in this passage is the word *πανουργία*, translated above as “cunning.” Throughout ancient Greek literature, the term was typically used pejoratively.⁶⁵ It originally had the sense of having the ability “to do all work” (as derived from the stems *παν-* and *εργ-*) and suggested the willingness to do *anything* or go to *any* lengths to achieve one’s goal, in particular, to do so in a sly or cunning manner.⁶⁶ It is in this sense that Paul uses the word in 4:2 and 3. He denies having acted in any kind of devious or cunning manner (*περιπατοῦντες ἐν πανουργίᾳ*). However, he also insists that he has not acted furtively. Nothing that he has done has been hidden from sight as if it were shameful (*τὰ κρυπτὰ τῆς αἰσχύνης*).

In the verse that follows (4:3), Paul acknowledges the possibility that his gospel has been hidden: “And even if our gospel is hidden (*κακαλυμμένον*), it is hidden among those who are perishing.” At first glance, what Paul means by his gospel being hidden is unclear. However, his claim makes sense when we understand that for Paul, the gospel means not only the message itself, but also the messenger.⁶⁷ In short, by “gospel” Paul means his own activity of preaching of the gospel. Although in 4:3 he acknowledges the theoretical possibility that something has been hidden (*κεκαλυμμένον*) during the course of his preaching, he insists that it could only have been hidden from those who are condemned (*ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις*).

Paul’s claim that he has acted openly also surfaces in 3:12 where he insists that he has acted with *παρρησία*. While the term *παρρησία* has sometimes been rendered as “boldness” in that verse, such a translation is inadequate. While “boldness” certainly constitutes part of Paul’s meaning, *παρρησία* here primarily suggests “openness” or “transparency” in the sense that he has been bold enough to act openly. We will examine both of these verses (3:12 and 4:3) in more detail in a later chapter.

Claims of openness and transparency emerge in at least two other places, toward the end of Paul’s letter. The first is in the hardship catalogue of chapter 6 where the apostle insists that his love for the Corinthian community has been sincere (*ἐν ἀγάπῃ ἀνυποκρίτως*, 6:6) and that his speech to them has been open and honest (*ἐν λόγῳ ἀληθείας*, 6:7). Directly following the hardship catalogue, Paul again claims that, in both speech and intention, he has been open in his

65 For examples, see Otto Bauernfeind, “*πανουργία, πανουργος*,” in *TDNT* 5, 723–26.

66 Bauernfeind, “*πανουργία*,” 723. For the use of the term in anti-sophistic rhetoric, see Hans Dieter Betz, *Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition: Eine exegetische Untersuchung zu seiner ‘Apologie’ 2 Korinther 10–13*, BHT 45 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1972), 104–5.

67 We will explore this idea further in chapter 6.

dealings with the community: “we have spoken frankly to you Corinthians, our heart is wide open to you” (τὸ στόμα ἡμῶν ἀνέφωγεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, Κορίνθιοι, ἡ καρδία ἡμῶν πεπλάτυνται, 6:11). Paul insists here that any constriction or constraint in the relationship has come not from him but from the side of the community (6:12). He therefore calls upon the community to open itself to him as he has opened himself to it (6:13). Paul repeats his appeal immediately thereafter with the words, “make room for us” (7:2a). Finally, in the very last sentence of the letter, at least as it is preserved in canonical 2 Corinthians, the apostle tells the Corinthians, “my openness towards you has been extensive” (πολλή μοι παρρησία πρὸς ὑμᾶς).

In various places throughout the apology, then, the apostle denies acting in a cunning, furtive, insincere, or hypocritical manner. He insists, to the contrary, that he has been open and honest with the Corinthian community. The fact that this issue emerges over and over again in 2:14–7:4 suggests that Paul’s openness had been questioned by the Corinthians. What could have been the cause of such? As we will see, the concerns about Paul’s openness apparently had at their root the presumption that the apostle was somehow attempting to defraud the community.

Charges of Fraud

Besides the passages that center on Paul’s openness, there also exist a number of places in 2:14–7:4 where Paul denies having engaged in any financial chicanery. One of the best examples appears in a passage that we have already looked at, in 2:17, where Paul makes the claim that:

We are not like so many peddlers of God’s word (ὥς οἱ πολλοὶ καπελεῦντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ), but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God (ὥς ἐκ θεοῦ) and standing in his presence.

Here, Paul defends his integrity, claiming that he does not preach for money as do οἱ πολλοί.⁶⁸ On the contrary, he insists, he has been acting sincerely as befits an envoy, commissioned by the deity (ὥς ἐκ θεοῦ).⁶⁹

68 For “peddling” the gospel, see Lucian’s satire focused on Peregrinus Proteus who, among other actions, fleeced gullible Christians of their hard-earned wages (*Peregr.* 11–13). For more on the process of selling religion (i.e., faking religious experiences) in antiquity, see Frederik Poulsen, “Talking, Weeping and Bleeding Sculptures,” *Acta Archaeologica* 16 (1945): 178–211.

69 As mentioned above, some scholars have argued that Paul’s denial that he is a “peddler” of the gospel in 2:17 has nothing to do with his own actions but rather it functions as

The apostle's denial that he "peddles" God's word in 2:17 recalls a similar disclaimer in 4:2 where he claims that he has not engaged in "falsifying God's word" (μή . . . δολοῦντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ). Like the verb *καπελεύω* ("to peddle") from the earlier verse, the verb *δολόω* ("to falsify") in 4:2 appears nowhere else in Paul's letters.⁷⁰ While both terms point to the act of selling, in the background of each lies the stereotype of the shady huckster peddling inferior merchandise at inflated prices. Because of these connotations, both *καπελεύω* (as well as its corresponding noun *κάπηλος*) and *δολόω* were used to describe itinerant teachers who "hawked" their cheap ideas solely to make money.⁷¹ For example, the satirist Lucian pairs the verb *δολόω* with the noun *κάπηλος* ("huckster") to describe flim-flam philosophers who "sell their lessons as [wine] merchants (οἱ κάπελοι) their wines—most of them (οἱ πολλοί) adulterating and cheating (*δολώσαντες*) and giving false measure."⁷² Elsewhere, Lucian pokes fun at the hypocrisy of such phony teachers, intent only on gain:

Most shameless of all, though each one of [these philosophers] says he needs nothing and bawls it abroad that "only the wise man is rich," after a little he presents himself and asks for something, and is angry if he does

an indirect accusation against his apostolic rivals, i.e., the "false apostles" mentioned in 2 Corinthians 10–13 (e.g., Bornkamm, "Vorgeschichte," 167; Georgi, *Opponents*, 234–35; Collange, *Énigmes*, 37–38; and Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 104). However, as we have seen, there is no good evidence for the presence of apostolic rivals in Corinth at this time. But even if we were to assume the presence of apostolic rivals in Corinth when Paul wrote 2:14–7:4, such an identification would nevertheless be unlikely because the simplest reading of the denial suggests that this verse has to do with suspicions about Paul himself. See, for instance, Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 143; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 215; and Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 44. In addition, 2 Cor 7:2, which suggests that Paul had been suspected of fraud, supports the conclusion that 2:17 focuses on Paul's activities, not those of rival apostles as will be discussed below. It is worth noting that some scholars who claim that 2:17 functions as an indirect accusation against the "false apostles" nevertheless interpret 7:2 as a denial of charges that have actually been made against Paul, apparently without regard to the inconsistency of such an interpretation. See, for example, Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 203; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 369; and Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 217.

70 They are not only absent in Paul's writings. Neither of these terms appear anywhere in the New Testament.

71 For the use of *καπελεύω* in ancient literature, see Hans Windisch, "καπελεύω," in *TDNT* (1965), 603–5; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 178; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 212–15. For *δολόω*, see Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 218.

72 *Hermotimus* 59. Note Lucian's use of οἱ πολλοί to describe the philosophers/wine merchants in the same way that Paul describes the people who would peddle God's word in 2 Cor 2:17.

not get it. It's just as if someone in royal robes, with a high turban and a diadem and all the other marks of kingly royalty, should play the mendicant, begging of men worse off than himself.⁷³

Paul's use of the verbs *καπελεύω* in 2:17 and *δολώω* in 4:2 to deny inappropriate behavior on his part was hardly accidental. Rather, the appearance of these verbs suggests that he, like Lucian's phony philosophers, was suspected of *merely playing the role of* the preacher of the gospel. Apparently, as we have already seen, some Corinthians viewed Paul not as a self-sufficient apostle, but as an unscrupulous religious charlatan whose true motivation was greed.⁷⁴

At the end of Paul's letter, in 7:2, the apostle likewise defends himself against charges of fraudulent behavior. In that verse, he puts forth a triple denial: "we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of (*ἐπλεονεκτήσαμεν*) no one." The third verb in this series (*πλεονεκτέω*) carries the unmistakable connotation of financial wrongdoing.⁷⁵ It means to "defraud" or "cheat."⁷⁶ As a result, a better translation of the phrases in 7:2 would be: "we have not hurt anyone, we have not ruined anyone, [and] we have not defrauded anyone." As Paul's denial in this passage makes clear, the apostle was accused of some kind of financial shenanigans in his dealings with the Corinthians.

Based upon what we see in the various above-mentioned passages (2:17; 4:2–3; 7:2), it seems obvious that Paul's honesty and integrity were called into

73 Lucian, *Piscator* 35.

74 These suspicions, it seems, were not put to rest by 2:14–7:4 for evidence of them reemerges in the subsequent apology (chapters 10–13), particularly in 12:14–18.

75 The second verb, *φθείρω*, can also have monetary implications (as in ruining someone financially), although it need not. See BAGD, s.v.; Also see R.H. Strachan, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, MNTC (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1935), 124–5; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 217; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 369; and Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 482.

76 A good example of the use of the verb in this way appears in Dio Chrysostom, *Avar.* (*Or.* 17) 8: "But greed is not only the greatest evil to man himself, but it injures his neighbors as well. And so no one pities, forsooth, the covetous man or cares to instruct him, but all shun him and regard him as their enemy. If, then, each of those here present wishes to know the enormity of this wickedness, let him consider how he himself feels toward those who attempt to cheat him (*πρὸς τοὺς ἐπιχειροῦντας πλεονεκτεῖν*)." Trans. J.W. Cohoon (LCL), slightly emended. *Πλεονεκτέω* also appears in 12:17–18, where it refers to both Paul and Titus. See also Betz, *Paulus und die Sokratische Tradition*, 116–17; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 366; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 482. Jean-Pierre Vernant equates the related term, *πλεονεξία* (in the classical period) with "a corrupted disposition, a perverse will . . . the desire to have more than others, more than one's share, to have everything" (Jean-Pierre Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought* [Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982], 84).

question by some in the Corinthian community. His behavior was considered furtive and underhanded and his motivation for preaching was thought to be the desire for money. But how could such suspicions about Paul have arisen? After all, as he had made abundantly clear in 1 Corinthians 9, he preached the gospel to the Corinthians for free. Since he earned his own living with his hands, he could hardly have been accused of draining away the resources of the community.⁷⁷ There seems to be only one source from which suspicions concerning Paul's honesty could possibly have arisen: the collection of money destined for the community of believers in Jerusalem. In order to understand how the collection for the Jerusalem church could have caused such problems, we need to briefly survey Paul's collection efforts prior to the composition of 2 Cor 2:14–7:4.

The Collection Prior to 2 Cor 2:14–7:4

The importance of the Jerusalem collection for Paul is not to be underestimated. Both the completion of the collection in his own communities and the reception of it by the Jerusalem church were key—at least in Paul's mind—to his own success as an apostle and to the validity of the gentile mission. The collection's origins can be traced to Paul's meeting with the leaders of the Jerusalem church, a meeting held to discuss what, if anything, was to be required of gentiles who wanted to join the movement. This meeting is narrated by the apostle in Gal 2:1–10.⁷⁸

According to that account, the Jerusalem leadership (i.e., the “Pillars”) essentially agreed with Paul's Torah-free gospel for gentiles, or as Paul put it, “they added nothing” (οὐδὲν προσανέθεντο) to his message.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, two important conditions accompanied the Pillars' approval of Paul's gospel message to the gentiles. The first condition, described in Gal 2:9, stipulated that Paul (and Barnabas) would not evangelize among Jews but only among

77 Cf. also 2 Cor 11:8–9; 12:17–18. It should be noted that Paul probably also received outside support for his mission in Corinth as his claim in 2 Cor 11:8 indicates: “I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you.”

78 The meeting is also narrated in Acts 15. However, the Galatians represents the more reliable source. See Pervo, *Acts*, 369.

79 Perhaps the desperate straits of the Jerusalemites brought on by a local famine made the leaders more open to Paul's Torah-free gospel than they might have been otherwise. See Stephan Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor: Reciprocity, Strategy and Theological Reflection in Paul's Collection*, WUNT² 124 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 114.

gentiles. The second condition is expressed in the final verse describing the meeting, “[The “Pillars”] asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do” (2:10).⁸⁰ It is almost universally understood that Paul’s phrase, “remember the poor” refers to a one-time collection of money raised among the gentile believers to be given to “the poor” in Jerusalem.⁸¹

We first hear of Paul’s collection efforts among the Corinthians at the end of 1 Corinthians (16:1–4), where the apostle instructs the Corinthians—most of whom likely had little money to spare—to set aside whatever they could afford each week.⁸² In this way, the community would be able to raise significantly more money than they would if a one-time collection were taken, an option excluded by the apostle (1 Cor 16:2). But what happened next? It seems that while the collection was begun in Corinth (an effort led by Titus, as 2 Cor 8:6 indicates), it had not been completed. Instructions given by Paul to complete the collection appear in 2 Corinthians 8, as does Paul’s commission of Titus and two “brothers” to lead this effort. But where does 2 Corinthians 8 fit into the Corinthian chronology?

As we saw in the previous chapter, Bornkamm, (and others who followed) placed chapter 8 late in the Corinthian chronology, after the resolution of the Corinthian crisis. But more recently, Mitchell has argued that 2 Corinthians 8 represents not a late letter but an early one, indeed, the earliest of all the

80 Most scholars have understood the collection to be part of the larger agreement. Betz, for example, points out that Paul’s use of the term μόνον (“only”) indicates that the collection was a concession on Paul’s part, even though he had insisted earlier (2:6) that the agreement was without conditions (*Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, in *Hermeneia* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979], 101). Joubert, however, disagrees. He argues that in terms of ancient practices of benefaction, Jerusalem’s recognition of Paul as a legitimate partner was a benefaction by them that obligated Paul to show his gratitude with a return service. That service, which was requested by the Jerusalem leaders, was the collection (*Paul as Benefactor*, 73–115).

81 Paul’s more formal designation for the effort was probably, “the contribution meant for the saints” (ἡ διακονία τῆς εἰς τοὺς ἀγίους), which is the label that he gives the effort in 2 Cor 8:4 and 9:1. See Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 46.

82 Meeks, who argues for significant economic diversity in Corinth, nevertheless remarks, “[Paul’s instruction] bespeaks the economy of small people, not destitute but not commanding capital either” (*First Urban Christians*, 65). For the more recent suggestion that the Corinthian community was more economically impoverished than Meeks and others have argued, see Justin J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998) and Steven J. Friesen, “Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-Called New Consensus,” *JNTS* 26 (2004): 323–61.

documents contained in canonical 2 Corinthians.⁸³ The claim for the early date of chapter 8 is supported by a number of arguments, three of which will be articulated below.

The first argument focuses on 2 Corinthians 8 (particularly 8:6 and 8:18) in relation to 12:18. Mitchell argues, like Johannes Weiss had before her, that chapter 8 must precede chapters 10–13 because the former points to the *future* visit of Titus and the unnamed brother whereas 12:18 describes that visit as a past event.⁸⁴ Therefore, 2 Corinthians 8 cannot be a late letter as claimed by Bornkamm and his followers.

In a second argument, briefly mentioned in the last chapter, Mitchell points out that the deliberative rhetoric of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians 8 differs from the defensive, forensic rhetoric employed by Paul in 2:14–7:4 and 2 Corinthians 10–13. The deliberative rhetoric of chapter 8 suggests that the suspicion and mistrust between Paul and the community had not yet developed in the way that it manifests itself in 2:14–7:4 and chapters 10–13. Consequently, 2 Corinthians 8 more likely represents an earlier letter in the Corinthian correspondence, written before the crisis had fully emerged.⁸⁵

A third, especially strong, argument focuses on the difference between Paul's instructions for the collection in 1 Cor 16:1–4 and 2 Cor 8:18–19. Mitchell argues that differences between the two sets of instructions can explain the accelerating deterioration of the relationship between Paul and the members of the Corinthian community. In particular, she insists, it can explain the emergence of suspicions about the apostle's honesty and integrity.

In 1 Cor 16:1–4, as mentioned above, Paul had instructed the Corinthians to begin to lay aside money on a weekly basis so that sufficient funds would have already accumulated by the time that he returned to Corinth (16:2). But more importantly, as Mitchell points out, Paul had also included instructions about the delivery of the collection to Jerusalem:

83 Mitchell, "Korintherbriefe," 1688–94; idem, "Corinthian Correspondence;" idem, "Paul's Letters".

84 As we saw in the previous chapter, those who support one variation of the two-document hypothesis have used these same passages to argue the chronological priority of 1–9 over chapters 10–13.

85 Mitchell, "Corinthian Correspondence," 23 and idem, "Paul's Letters," 328–30. Mitchell also notes some interesting parallels. She points to the similar appeals in 1 Cor 7:6 and 2 Cor 8:8; 1 Cor 7:25 and 2 Cor 8:8, and 1 Cor 7:35 and 2 Cor 8:10. In addition, she notes, among other things, Paul's focus on the Corinthians' "eloquence" and "knowledge" in both 1 Cor 1:5 and 8:7.

³ And when I arrive, I will send any whom you approve with letters to take your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴ If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me (1 Cor 16:3–4).

As this passage indicates, Paul had originally given *the Corinthian community* the responsibility for deciding who would accompany the collection to Jerusalem. And indeed, Paul's statement—"if it seems advisable"—suggests that they would also have had some say in whether he himself would accompany the money for presumably the Corinthians would have weighed in on such advisability.

But, in 2 Corinthians 8, the apostle appears to have reneged on the agreement. In 8:19, Paul announces that:

[a certain] brother . . . famous among all the churches for his proclaiming of the good news . . . has . . . been appointed . . . to travel with us while we are administering this generous undertaking for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our goodwill.

From the perspective of the Corinthians—who thought that *they* had been given the right to choose the delegation to take their collection to Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:3–4)—they have now abruptly and inexplicably been cut out of any decisions regarding the transportation of *their* collection to Jerusalem. Instead, they have simply been informed that Paul and the brother would convey the money (8:18–19). Although the Macedonian church probably pressured Paul to allow this unnamed brother to accompany the collection,⁸⁶ nevertheless, Paul himself narrated the plan to the Corinthians and likewise commended "the brother" to them. Consequently, from the perspective of the Corinthians, Paul had betrayed them.⁸⁷

It is likely that questions about Paul's honesty began to arise following the community's reception of chapter 8. Anger at being cut out of the decision to determine who would accompany the collection caused the Corinthians, or at least some within the community, to question the apostle's honesty and sincerity. Some may have surmised from the new transportation plans that the

86 Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 73.

87 Mitchell, "Corinthian Correspondence," 27–28; idem, "Paul's Letters," 328. I should note that it is possible that the Corinthians misunderstood Paul here. Perhaps in the earlier letter, Paul's intent was to inform them that they would choose representatives to accompany the Corinthian collection just as "the brother" appears to have been appointed by the Macedonian communities to accompany *their* money.

whole enterprise was a sham; the collection was *not* going to Jerusalem at all but rather directly into Paul's pocket.⁸⁸

But even those who remained sympathetic to Paul also had reason to be upset by 2 Corinthians 8 for in his less-than-flattering appeal to the Corinthians in verses 1–6, the apostle seems to demean the Corinthians in comparison with the Macedonians.⁸⁹ The combination of the change in plans for the collection and Paul's insensitive treatment of the Corinthians likely created room for a few malcontents in the community—probably some who had previously been humiliated by 1 Corinthians—to gain a hearing among the rest of the members of ἐκκλησία who had, up until this point, likely remained loyal to Paul.⁹⁰ The scenario outlined by Mitchell easily explains the suspicions about underhanded behavior and dishonesty that surface in 2:14–7:4—suspicions to which Paul is forced to respond.

While Mitchell's suggestion for the early date of chapter 8 can help explain the emergence of some of the important issues in 2:14–7:4—issues that seem unrelated to the community's reception of 1 Corinthians, there remains a significant issue that we have not yet fully examined: Paul's bodily weakness. Although, as has already been suggested, this issue was likely tied to concerns about Paul's competence or fitness as a divine envoy, evidence for 2:14–7:4 nevertheless recommends that it also was tied to suspicions about the Jerusalem collection.

Paul's Weakness

The amount of space that Paul devotes to defending his weak bodily state in 2:14–7:4 tells us that his poor physical presence was an issue of great concern to the Corinthian community. Throughout the apology, the apostle is forced to

88 Collections were not rare among freelance religious figures: Valerius Maximus mentions a fugitive who fled Rome by putting on the robe of an Isis priest and taking up a monetary collection (*stipem*) as he made his way out of town (7.3.8). Cicero insists that collections should not be permitted except on certain days and only by devotees of the Idean mother (*De legibus* 2.29.9). Both of these passages, particularly the latter, suggest that collections by religious figures/groups were common. Cf. also Josephus *Antiquitates judaicae*. 18.65. I am grateful to Heidi Wendt for pointing out these texts to me.

89 Cf. Mitchell, "Paul's Letters," 330.

90 It is possible that the leader of such a group of malcontents was "the wrongdoer" mentioned in 7:12 and alluded to in 2:5–11, both parts of the letter sent to Corinth after the crisis had subsided (1:1–2:13; 7:5–16).

continually redefine his weakness in positive terms. For example, in 4:7–9, he describes himself as follows:

⁷ But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.

⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed;

perplexed, but not driven to despair;

⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken;

struck down, but not destroyed;

In the first verse of this passage, Paul portrays himself as a meager and fragile clay jar containing the “treasure” of the gospel.⁹¹ As such a humble vessel, Paul describes his appearance as “afflicted,” “perplexed,” “persecuted,” and “struck down.” Such terms obviously refer both to his physical and mental state. He claims in response that, despite appearances to the contrary, he is *not* “crushed,” “driven to despair,” “forsaken,” or “destroyed.”

In the verses that immediately follow, Paul describes his remarkable and unexpected recovery from the afflictions recounted in the previous verses as nothing short of miraculous. Indeed, he redefines episodes of his near demise and recovery as carrying and displaying both the dying and rising of Jesus.

¹⁰ [We are] always carrying around in our bodies the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. ¹¹ For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. ¹² So death is at work in us, but life in you.

Here Paul boldly redefines the gospel as not only something proclaimed by word of mouth but also by way of his bodily presence.⁹² The apostle’s suffering is the reiteration of Christ’s dying (νέκρωσις) and the apostle’s recovery, Christ’s resurrection.⁹³

91 Here we also find an allusion to ritual processions. See Paul B. Duff, “Apostolic Suffering and the Language of Processions in 2 Cor 4:7–10,” *BTB* 21 (1991): 158–65.

92 Here too we see processional imagery. See Paul B. Duff, “Metaphor, Motif, and Meaning: The Rhetorical Strategy Behind the Image ‘Led in Triumph’ in 2 Corinthians 2:14,” *CBQ* 53 (1991): 79–92.

93 It is noteworthy that Paul uses the word νέκρωσις here for it, unlike the more normal θάνατος, indicates the process of dying (BAGD, s.v.).

It is important to ask why Paul felt compelled to defend his physical state so vigorously. Of course, as mentioned above, Paul's weak physical appearance (and his low social status) hardly inspired confidence. The appearance of an impoverished and battered manual laborer obviously does not fit the popular expectation of an envoy sent by the deity. Furthermore, according to the prevailing physiognomic presuppositions, Paul's weakness also suggested moral failings.⁹⁴ While both points represent important reasons for Paul to defend himself, the questions about his honesty and integrity that we see elsewhere in 2:14–7:4 suggest that it is the latter point that appears to best capture the issue of Corinthian concern.

Another piece of evidence from 2:14–7:4 that can help us further flesh out the underlying situation that Paul faced appears in the hardship catalogue of 6:4b–10:

...as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵ beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶ by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, ⁷ truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸ in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹ as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰ as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

This catalogue can be broken down into four discrete sections:

1. 6:4b–5, consisting of a list of hardships introduced by the proposition ἐν,
2. 6:6–7a, in which Paul presents a list of his credentials, each also introduced by the proposition ἐν,
3. 6:7b–8a, three phrases, each of which begin with διὰ and each of which contains an antithesis,⁹⁵ and
4. 8b–10, a list of hardships in the form of antitheses, each introduced by ὡς.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ See above, note 48.

⁹⁵ It is worth noting that 6:7b in content more closely resembles section 2. However, in format (specifically, beginning with διὰ) it looks more like the third section. As such it functions as a transition.

⁹⁶ For the structure, see Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 353–59 and Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 453–54.

For our purposes, it is the final section of the catalogue that is most important for it specifically focuses on the situation that Paul faced in Corinth.⁹⁷ The section consists of seven antitheses, each beginning with ὥς. In this final part of the catalogue, Paul presents us with different perspectives on his physical trials, set up in antithetical pairs:

⁸ . . . ὥς πλάνοι καὶ ἀληθεῖς (“[we are seen] as imposters, and yet we are true”);

⁹ ὥς ἀγνοούμενοι καὶ ἐπιγινωσκόμενοι (“as unknown and yet well-known”); ὥς ἀποθνήσκοντες καὶ ἰδοὺ ζῶμεν (“as dying but see, we live!”);

ὥς παιδευόμενοι καὶ μὴ θανατούμενοι (“as punished and yet not killed”);

¹⁰ ὥς λυπούμενοι ἀεὶ δὲ χαίροντες (“as grieving but always rejoicing”);

ὥς πτωχοὶ δὲ πλουτίζοντες (“as impoverished but [in reality] rich”);

ὥς μηδὲν ἔχοντες καὶ πάντα κατέχοντες (“as having nothing but possessing everything”).

In terms of its structure, this part of the catalogue looks somewhat like the catalogue that appears earlier, in 4:8–9.⁹⁸ As in that earlier passage, the initial image of each antithesis in 6:8b–10 represents Paul's situation *as it appears*. It is only in the second image that we see a true picture of the apostle.⁹⁹ The final three antitheses, appearing in 6:10—like the information given in 6:4b–5—have general applicability to Paul's career as a preacher, in Corinth and elsewhere (“as grieving, but always rejoicing, as impoverished but rich, as having nothing but possessing everything”).¹⁰⁰ But, in the first four antitheses, we see specific references to the situation faced by Paul in Corinth.

97 The first section (6:4b–5) lists more general than specific hardships, and, as such, it represents a list of cumulative difficulties that Paul had to endure throughout his entire ministry, not just in relation to Corinth.

98 Similar antithetical pairings (as we also see in 4:8–9) can also be found in catalogues of Epictetus (*Diatribai* 2.19.24) and Plutarch (*Moralia* 1057D–E). For a helpful discussion of such philosophical hardship catalogues, see John T. Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel: An Examination of the Catalogues of Hardships in the Corinthian Correspondence*, SBLDS 99 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988), 47–116.

99 Fitzgerald, *Cracks*, 195–96.

100 Considerable discussion has focused on the first of these three antitheses (“as grieving, but always rejoicing”) in 6:10a. Thrall, for instance argues that this antithesis does not function in the same way. Rather, λυπούμενοι must be meant in a real sense. The apostle has experienced both sorrow and joy (Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 466). However, Paul's use of the term ἀεὶ (“always”) in the second part of the antithesis seems to argue against her suggestion. Furnish contends that Paul is thinking of sorrow in more general terms, “which the world associates with fear of death and the pain of punishment” (*II Corinthians*, 359).

The first antithesis (“[we are treated] as impostors [πλάνοι], and yet are true”), tells us that Paul *appears* (at least to some) as a charlatan (πλάνος), intent on deceiving the community.¹⁰¹ This antithesis reflects the kind of suspicion about Paul that we have seen elsewhere in the apology, that is, suspicion that he is a “peddler” of the gospel (2:17), that he is “falsifying God’s word” (4:2), that he is intent on cheating the community (7:2).

The first element of the second antithesis describes Paul “as unknown” (ὡς ἀγνωστούμενοι). Because of suspicions focused on Paul’s honesty and integrity, suspicions that we have seen elsewhere in 2:14–7:4, the Corinthians apparently wanted assurances that Paul was in fact who he claimed to be. We will examine this particular issue in much greater detail in the next chapter. For now, however, it is sufficient to note that—in the second phrase of the antithesis (“and yet well-known”)—Paul insists to the contrary that the community knows him well.¹⁰²

The third antithesis (“as dying but see, we live!”) reveals that the apostle had been *perceived* by the community as a man on the way to his death.¹⁰³ But, in reality, Paul insists, he is still alive, against all odds. We can also see Paul refute such expectations in the earlier hardship catalogue where he insists that although, “struck down” ultimately he is “not destroyed” (4:9).¹⁰⁴

The fourth antithesis (“as punished [παιδευόμενοι], and yet not killed”) builds on the third. Structurally, it occupies an important place in this final section of the hardship catalogue. Of the seven antitheses appearing in 6:8b–10, this one falls into the fourth position. That is to say, it occupies the very center of the series. As such, it likely functions as the climax of the series. In this particular antithesis, the apostle insists that although it may seem that he is being punished (and as the second term of the antithesis suggests, his punishment

101 The term πλάνος is used in Matthew’s gospel in reference to Jesus as a charlatan or impostor. The chief priests and the Pharisees approached Pilate to ask for guards for Jesus’ tomb: “Sir, we remember what that impostor (ὁ πλάνος) said while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise again.’” It is also used in 2 John 7 to refer to the Antichrist.

102 Paul makes this point in particular in 3:2–3, which we will look at below in chapter 5. See also his comments in 12:11a in his later apology.

103 Because of the importance of this particular idea in the chapters leading up to 6:4b–10, Furnish (*II Corinthians*, 358) has suggested that this antithesis represents the epitome of at least the central section of Paul’s discussion of his ministry (in 4:7–5:10). Cf. Collange, *Enigmes*, 298. I would instead place as central the following antithesis, “as punished, and yet not killed.”

104 We can also see a reflection of the opinion that Paul’s physical suffering will result in his death in the letter’s initial image; there Paul describes himself as “led in triumph” like a captured prisoner of war who was led to his execution in a triumphal procession. We will discuss this in the next chapter.

would result in death), in reality he survives.¹⁰⁵ His surprising survival calls to mind again the antitheses in 4:8–9 although in that earlier series there no mention of punishment. This raises the question: why would Paul bring in the idea of punishment here? Were some in the community suggesting that Paul was being punished? For what reason?

Ralph Martin has hypothesized that Paul here implies that his physical sufferings were interpreted by his opponents as God's punishment for his former life as a persecutor of the church.¹⁰⁶ Although Martin is correct to see in this antithesis an accusation by Paul's opposition, there is a problem with his suggestion that Paul's detractors thought that God was punishing him for his former life as a persecutor. Although the apostle speaks of his former practice of trying to destroy the ἐκκλησία elsewhere in his letters, nowhere in 2:14–7:4 do we see any reference to his earlier role as a persecutor of the church.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, since Paul is clearly on the defensive in 2:14–7:4, it seems unlikely that he would allude to past wrongdoings here if he could avoid it. Consequently, Martin's explanation seems unlikely. To what then could Paul's mention of punishment here refer?

Given the number of places in 2:14–7:4 that Paul defends himself against suspicions of underhanded behavior, dishonesty, and fraud (e.g., 2:17; 4:2; 7:2), it seems much more likely that these suspicions lie behind this reference to punishment. I suggest that the dual perception that Paul was both on the way to his death (ὡς ἀποθνήσκοντες) and that he was being punished (ὡς παιδευόμενοι)—presumably by the deity—provides the key to the Corinthians' keen interest in Paul's physical condition. From the perspective of Paul's detractors in Corinth, the apostle's poor physical state was the direct result of God's punishment—a punishment allegedly doled out for the apostle's suspected misdeeds against the community (dishonesty and fraud in particular).

There is an interesting passage in 1 Corinthians that suggests that there may be some connection between the community's reception of that letter and the accusation that Paul was being punished for his alleged attempt to defraud the community. In that earlier letter, Paul had warned the community about the danger of participating unworthily in the Lord's supper:

²⁷ Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord.

¹⁰⁵ It is noteworthy that Paul casts this particular antithesis in language reminiscent of Ps 117:18 (LXX).

¹⁰⁶ Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 182–83.

¹⁰⁷ Paul describes himself in this way in Gal 1:13–17 and in 1 Cor 15:9.

²⁸ Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves.

In this passage, Paul focuses on about those who eat and drink “without discerning the body (μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα).” What does he mean by this phrase? The term “body” (σῶμα) here obviously points to the believing community, the “body of Christ.” Not “discerning the body” therefore would constitute an attack on the community. For those who assaulted the community by “[eating] the bread or [drinking] the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner,” the result, Paul claims, would be divine judgment. Paul clarifies what he means by such judgment in the verse that immediately follows (11:30) where he ties eating “without discerning the body” to the physical misfortune that the Corinthians had recently experienced: “for this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died” (11:30).

In light of Paul's comments in 1 Cor 11:27–30, one cannot help but wonder if the apostle's own words might not have been the source of Corinthian speculation about his own suffering. Paul's seeming lack of sympathy for the sick and dying in the community—like so many other statements in 1 Corinthians—could have easily created ill-will. As with the issue of self-commendation, it hardly seems unreasonable to assume that Paul's detractors turned the apostle's comments about the suffering and death in the community back against him. In other words, it is possible and even likely that they interpreted his own physical suffering in a similar way, as the deity's vengeance for misdeeds, in Paul's case, for his alleged attempt to defraud the Corinthians under the pretext of a collection. We will explore this point further in the chapter that follows.

Summary

In this chapter we have seen that discontent with Paul arose in Corinth for several reasons. Problems originally arose when the community received and read 1 Corinthians. Paul's sometimes harsh language and unyielding tone no doubt upset some members of the assembly. The apostle's status as a common laborer probably caused some (who felt themselves to be Paul's social superiors) to question his qualifications to give them instruction. The fact that Paul continually held himself up as a model for the Corinthians to emulate likely further offended them. Resentment against Paul, however, spread further when the community read Paul's subsequent letter to them (2 Corinthians 8). Based upon their understanding of that letter, the community understood

itself to have been cut out of any involvement in the delivery of the collection to Jerusalem. The Corinthians were likely further insulted by Paul's comments in the same letter that suggested that the apostle thought more highly of the Macedonians than he did of them.

It is likely that with the reception of 2 Corinthians 8, the complaints of those who had previously been disaffected by 1 Corinthians began to gain some traction among the rest of the community members. Suspicions about Paul's motives for instituting the collection began to circulate. Ultimately, it was decided by some that Paul's weakness of body demonstrated his moral failing. It was proposed that he was, in fact, a charlatan, who had worked his way into the confidence of the Corinthians in order to take their money. Paul's physical weakness was then further interpreted as God's punishment for his attempted assault on the ἐκκλησία. It is this situation that Paul faced when he composed his apology of 2:14–7:4 and it is his response to that situation that we will examine in the next chapter.

“Who is Fit for These Things?” (2 Cor 2:14–3:6)

Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the reasons that Paul composed his apology to the Corinthian community. As we saw, the apostle faced a developing crisis focused on his leadership. Some in Corinth were resentful of Paul; others were suspicious of him. But this situation did not spring up overnight. It unfolded over time. Although some resentment against Paul no doubt emerged when the community received 1 Corinthians, more significant discord likely arose with the arrival of the collection letter of 2 Corinthians 8. At that point, the flames of discontent spread, fanned most likely by those still smarting from the rebukes of the earlier letter.

In the current chapter, we will investigate the first section of the letter (2:14–3:6).¹ In light of our earlier findings, it is hardly unexpected that Paul takes up the issue of his fitness (ἱκανότης) in these verses (2:16–3:6). Nor is it surprising that he defends himself against self-commendation (3:1) or that he insists on his honesty and integrity (2:17). Nevertheless, other topics that he raises are both surprising and puzzling. Why, for example, does he open the apology with imagery derived from pagan ritual practice, specifically cultic processions (2:14–16)? Why does he raise the issue of *letters* of recommendation shortly thereafter (3:1–3)? For what reason does he allude to the Torah in his discussion of such letters (3:3)? Although Paul’s appeal to these various subjects may seem puzzling at first glance, as we will see, there is an underlying logic to his introduction of each of them.

Paul, a Participant in God’s Triumphal Procession

Paul opens his apology to the Corinthians with several vivid metaphors, each of which points to Greco-Roman ritual processions. The first metaphor alludes to a triumphal procession and the second, to the kinds of scent that were employed in epiphany processions:

¹ It is important to note that this represents the first verse of the apology *as we have it*. Obviously, the letter originally had an epistolary prescript. However, this prescript was cut away by the redactor of 2 Corinthians.

¹⁴ But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession (θριαμβεύοντι), and through us spreads the scent of the knowledge about him (τὴν ὁσμὴν τῆς γνώσεως αὐτοῦ) in every place, ¹⁵ for we are the fragrance (εὐωδία) of Christ in God's service among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; ¹⁶ to the one a scent from death to death, to the other a scent from life to life. Who is fit (ἱκανός) for these [activities]?

As we can see, the issue of Paul's fitness (ἱκανότης) is introduced at the end of this passage (2:16b). Consequently, it seems evident that the processional imagery is meant in some way to tie into Paul's discussion of his fitness for his role.

Paul's use of the unusual word θριαμβεύω in the first part of 2:14 is striking. The term normally denotes a military procession, of which the Roman triumph is our best example. In such a procession, a victorious general would celebrate a significant victory over his vanquished enemies. The vividness of the term θριαμβεύω is intensified by the way that Paul uses it. The context and the syntax of the passage indicate that Paul himself plays the role of the defeated prisoner of war led in triumph by the conquering deity (who plays the role of the triumphant general).² This image is particularly noteworthy in light of the readers' knowledge that enemy prisoners of war were normally executed during the course of the triumphal ritual.³

By beginning the apology with this image, Paul strikingly and succinctly communicates the Corinthians' suspicions about him.⁴ He is a man on the way to his death, they suspect, his afflictions the punishment of a vengeful God. It seems strange that Paul would begin his apology in this way for, by means of this image, he seems to be offering proof that he is *not* fit for his role. Is he

2 In the New Testament, the term θριαμβεύω appears only here and in Col 2:15 where τὰς ἀρχάς ("the rulers") and τὰς ἐξουσίας ("the authorities")—cosmic powers—are led in triumph by God.

3 For the meaning of θριαμβεύω as indicating that Paul was on the way to his death, see Scott Hafemann, *Suffering and the Spirit: An Exegetical Study of II Cor. 2:14–3:3 Within the Context of the Corinthian Correspondence*, WUNT² 19 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1986), 22–39; Paul B. Duff, "Metaphor, Motif, and Meaning: The Rhetorical Strategy Behind the Image 'Led in Triumph' in 2 Corinthians 2:14," *CBQ* 53 (1991): 79–92. For a recent study of the triumph, particularly with regard to the fate of prisoners of war, see Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 128–33. Beard points out that although prisoners were not always executed, nevertheless, such was the expectation.

4 Paul's opening corresponds to the "subtle opening (*insinuatio*) recommended by rhetoricians when one's opponents seem to have already convinced the audience of their position. See Duff, "Metaphor," 91–92.

conceding defeat to his detractors? To the contrary, Paul has a specific strategy in mind that takes advantage of the ambiguity of the triumphal imagery.

Although the image of a “triumphal” procession could point to a triumphal military parade, it need not. It could also carry another connotative meaning in the context of Greco-Roman cultic practice. A number of deities, including Isis, Serapis, Dionysus, and Cybele, were regularly hailed as triumphators and, as such, their ritual processions could likewise be understood as “triumphal” processions. The devotees of these deities who participated in such procession could therefore metaphorically be perceived as captives of the deity.⁵

Consequently, while *seeming* to assent to his detractors’ suspicions about him, Paul in fact takes advantage of the metaphorical flexibility of the image of being led in triumph to provide to the Corinthians, on the one hand, a picture of himself that his detractors would embrace—the apostle led to his death, a victim of the deity’s vengeance—and, on the other hand, the image of himself as a participant in an epiphany procession, a procession in which the deity and his or her mighty deeds are revealed to all.⁶ In other words, in light of the different metaphorical possibilities, the image of the triumphal procession succinctly captures Paul’s detractors’ suspicions about him and, at the same time, it insists that the saving act of the deity can be perceived the apostle’s own poor physical presence. Paul will again take up such processional imagery in various places throughout 2:14–7:4 in order to reinforce the latter understanding of God “leading him in triumph.” In those places, he will describe himself as the site of the deity’s epiphany, where God’s salvific act (i.e., the death and resurrection of Jesus) is displayed in his own flesh.⁷

5 Paul B. Duff, “Metaphor,” 83–86. See also the more recent article by Harold W. Attridge, “Making Scents of Paul: The Background and Sense of 2 Cor 2:14–17,” in *Early Christianity and Classical Culture: Comparative Studies in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald, Thomas H. Oldbricht, and L. Michael White, NovTSup 110 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 79–83.

6 For some good examples of the mighty deeds that were displayed in epiphany processions, see Paul Duff, “The Transformation of the Spectator: Power, Perception, and the Day of Salvation,” in *SBLSP* 26, ed. Kent Harold Richards (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), esp. 235–37. On the flexibility of the triumphal image, see Beard, *The Roman Triumph*. Beard notes that in the period under discussion, “the triumph, as a cultural category, as well as a ritual, had shifting and potentially controversial boundaries.” As an example of such shifting boundaries, Beard points to Antony’s “triumph” in Alexandria (Dio Cassius 49. 40. 3–4; Plutarch *Antonius* 50. 4; Velleius Paterculus 2. 82. 3–4; Strabo *Geographica* 2. 14–15), a triumph that was possibly staged as Dionysus procession (269–70).

7 As argued in Paul B. Duff, “Apostolic Suffering and the Language of Processions in 2 Cor 4:7–10,” *BTB* 21 (1991): 162–63; idem, “The Mind of the Redactor: 2 Cor 6:14–7:1 in Its Secondary Context,” *NovT* 35 (1993): 160–80.

The second metaphor, that of scent, also points to ritual processions and it too reflects the dispute between the apostle and his detractors. Sweet fragrances were sometimes associated with the advent of a deity and as a result, they were used in processions to signal the deity's approach.⁸ In the Isis ship procession described by Apuleius, for example, we encounter women spreading fragrant substances prior to the processional appearance of Isis:

[In the procession marched] some women attired in white vestments, and rejoicing in the fact that they bare garlands and flowers upon their heads, bespread the way with herbs, which they bare in their aprons, where the regal and devout procession should pass. Others carried shining mirrors behind them which were turned toward the goddess as she came, to shew her to those which came after as though they would meet her. Others bare combs of ivory, and declared by their gesture and motions of their arms and fingers that they were ordained and ready to dress and adorn the goddess's hair. Other dropped in the ways, as they went, various perfumes (*ceteris unguentis*) and pleasing balsam (*geniali balsamo*).⁹

The perfumes spread on the street in this procession obviously functioned to announce the approach of the goddess to the procession's viewers.¹⁰

In 2 Cor 2:14b–16a, Paul describes both himself and his gospel as a fragrant scent carried in procession in 2:14b–16a. When he first mentions scent, he describes himself as the vehicle of that scent. Through him, he claims, the scent (ὀσμὴ) of the γνῶσις about God is spread “in every place” (2:14b).¹¹ In the verses that immediately follow, however, Paul's metaphorical imagery changes

8 On scent as a sign of a deity's presence, see Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Knopf, 1986), 105, 112. On scent in connection with processions, see Attridge, “Making Scents of Paul,” 82–88.

9 Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 11.9. Trans. Adlington (LCL), slightly emended.

10 In another famous Hellenistic procession, the magnificent procession of Ptolemy II (Philadelphus), we also note a similar use of scent. In that procession, incense altars accompanied the display of ivory and gold thrones representing the gods (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 202A–B). It is not precisely clear if incense was actually burned on the altars during the procession (since the text does not specifically state that it was). Regardless, the mere presence of the altars would have signified the ritual act. See E.E. Rice, *The Grand Procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 116–19.

11 The genitive τῆς γνῶσεως αὐτοῦ is rendered here as objective indicating “knowledge about him.” Although αὐτοῦ is ambiguous (referring to either Christ or God), in keeping with Paul's statement in 4:6, I have taken it to point to God (cf. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 176).

somewhat. The neutral term, ὀσμή is exchanged for the more positive word, εὐωδία (“fragrance”).¹² After describing himself as “... the fragrance (εὐωδία) of Christ in God’s service (τῷ θεῷ),”¹³ the apostle suggests that this fragrance has the potential to be perceived in one of two ways. It could be sensed as either a pleasing fragrance or as a disagreeable stench, depending on whether one is among “those who are being saved” (οἱ σωζόμενοι) or “those who are perishing” (οἱ ἀπολλύμενοι).

At the beginning of the next verse (2:16a), Paul then focuses on the different reactions to the encounter with “the fragrance of Christ”: “to the one group [that fragrance] is a scent from death to death (ἐκ θανάτου εἰς θάνατον), to the other group, [it is] a scent from life to life (ἐκ ζωῆς εἰς ζωήν).” In other words, those who perceive in Paul’s gospel—that is, *both* message *and* messenger¹⁴—a focus on death (i.e., ἐκ θανάτου) are themselves perishing (εἰς θάνατον).¹⁵ Here, in a deft rhetorical move, Paul sets up a rather remarkable correlation. Since the apostle ties himself directly to Christ by claiming to be the latter’s εὐωδία, Paul says in effect that what is perceived in him (i.e., his poor physical presence) is nothing less than the gospel. Those who only see in his suffering his journey to death also by necessity understand Jesus’ death on the cross as a senseless tragedy. Such people, Paul insists, pay no heed to the resurrection proclamation and they are consequently perishing. In a sense, these people, so the apostle claims, view Paul’s ministry as nothing more than a ministry of death: a dying apostle proclaiming a dead messiah. But, on the other hand, those who perceive Paul’s gospel to be about life (ἐκ ζωῆς)—both Paul’s own continual, miraculous salvation from death as well as God’s vindication of Jesus through the resurrection—are themselves participating in life (εἰς ζωήν).¹⁶ Paul will continue to make this point throughout the letter.

As mentioned above, Paul concludes the three verses in which he metaphorically describes his ministry with the question: “who is fit (ἱκανός) for these [activities] (ταῦτα)?” Here he uses the term ἱκανός to describe the responsibility

12 As 2:16a suggests, ὀσμή can represent a pleasant or an unpleasant odor. Cf. BAGD, s.v.

13 I have translated τῷ θεῷ as a dative of the agent (Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956], 343 [1488]). Cf. Bultmann (*Second Letter*, 67) and Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 177.

14 Paul connects himself as διάκονος with the gospel by making the claim that *he* himself is the εὐωδία of Christ in 2:15.

15 Note the parallel ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις in 2:15.

16 Recently, Tzvi Novick has made the intriguing argument that Paul’s imagery of scent not only looks back to the “triumph” of the deity but forward as well to the image of the peddler (“Peddling Scents: Merchandise and Meaning in 2 Corinthians 2:14–17,” *JBL* 130 [2011]: 543–49).

of the one who presents the γνώσις (“knowledge”) about the deity, that is, the saving action of Christ (i.e., εὐωδία Χριστοῦ), to humanity with the result that some are saved and others condemned. The way that the question is framed (“who is fit for these [activities]?”) might suggest that the anticipated answer is “no one.”¹⁷ In the verses that follow, however, Paul indicates that he is indeed fit for such a role and that he has been made so (ἰκάνωσεν) by the deity.¹⁸

In these early verses of the letter then, we see that Paul not only lays claim to his role as intermediary, he also metaphorically addresses the issue of his fitness. By means of the imagery taken from the realm of pagan ritual processions, he boldly but implicitly asserts that he—despite his paltry physical presence—manifests the gospel message (i.e., the γνώσις of the deity). Evidence for his claim, he implies, need not be supplied because it is already present. However, it can only be perceived by “those who are being saved.”

Paul's Fitness (Ἰκάνότης) and That of Moses

In the final sentence of 2:16 (“who is fit (ἰκανός) for these [activities]?”), Paul raises the question of his fitness (ἰκάνότης). From this point until 3:6, Paul explicitly discusses it.¹⁹ The discussion employs a particular set of related terms rarely used by the apostle, ἰκανός (“fit,” “qualified,” “sufficient”), ἰκάνότης, (“fitness,” “qualification,” “sufficiency”) and ἰκανῶ (“to be fit,” “to be qualified,” “to be sufficient”).²⁰ Since these terms are so infrequently employed by the apostle, what accounts for their presence here?

17 This has been suggested, for example, by Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 72–73 and Hans Lietzmann, *An die Korinther I–II*, 3rd, HNT (Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1931), 109. To the contrary, see Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 190 and Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 208. It is worth noting, as Bernd Kuschnerus has pointed out, that the perceptive reader could have recognized that Paul had intended himself in 2:16b based on the self-description already articulated in 2:14–16a (*Die Gemeinde Als Brief Christi: Die Kommunikative Funktion der Metapher bei Paulus Am Beispiel von 2 Kor 2–5*, in *FRLANT* 197 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002], 138).

18 E.g., 2:17; 3:5; 3:12; 4:1; 4:6; etc.

19 While it would be fair to say that Paul's “fitness” represents the main topic of the entire apology, he does not use these terms beyond 3:6.

20 The exceptions being: 1 Cor 15:9 where Paul says, “For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle (οὐκ εἰμι ἰκανὸς καλεῖσθαι ἀπόστολος), because I persecuted the church of God,” 1 Cor 11:30, where the noun ἰκανός appears in connection with the number of dead in the community (χοιμῶνται ἰκανοί); in 2 Cor 2:6 in reference to punishment

As we saw in the last chapter, some scholars suggested that Paul uses this particular language because his apostolic rivals had used it. But, since there is insufficient evidence to place rival apostles in Corinth at the time that Paul wrote 2:14–7:4, this idea is hardly persuasive.²¹ Based on Ronald Hock’s work, we turned instead to Paul’s profession as a manual laborer and the possibility that the status that derived from such may have caused some in the community to question Paul’s *ἱκανότης* (“fitness”). While the apostle’s low-status as a manual laborer almost certainly contributed to questions about his adequacy for the role of God’s envoy, that low-status alone is insufficient to explain the importance of these terms (*ἱκανός*, *ἱκανότης*, *ἱκανώ*) here.

One place that has been suggested as the source of Paul’s *ἱκανός/ἱκανότης/ἱκανώ* terminology is the book of Exodus, specifically the scene of Moses’ commissioning.²² That scene’s narrative begins with Moses’s vision of the deity in the burning bush on Mount Horeb (Exod 3:1–3). There God informs him that he—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—has heard Israel crying out in its affliction and consequently, he is sending Moses to confront Pharaoh and lead Israel out of Egypt. But Moses resists, asking, “who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and lead the Israelites out of the land of Egypt” (Exod 3:11)? Although the deity reassures him, Moses continues to hesitate and, after arguing back and forth with God a number of times, he pleads, “Please

(*ἱκανὸν τῷ τοιοῦτῳ ἢ ἐπιτιμία αὐτῇ*); and in a textual variant of Rom 15:23 (B, C, et al.) in reference to years (*ἀπὸ ἱκανῶν ἐτῶν*).

- 21 Georgi, following a suggestion by Windisch (*zweite Korintherbrief*, 100), saw in 2:16b a reference to Joel 2:11. Although Georgi understood the language of “fitness” itself to have had its source with the opponents, he nevertheless understood the appeal to the Joel text as Paul’s response to his rivals claim that they were *ἱκανοί*: “Paul is saying in 2 Cor 2:16: if nobody can face divine judgment, how can a human being become a mediator of such a judgment?” (Georgi, *Opponents*, 231). But even if we allow for the possibility of apostolic rivals in Corinth at the time, Georgi’s attempt to smooth over the difference between Joel’s context and that of 2 Cor 2:16b is not persuasive. It is hard to believe that the Corinthians would have been able to follow such allusive logic.
- 22 Among those who have suggested this connection are A.M. Farrer, “The Ministry in the New Testament,” in *The Apostolic Ministry: Essays on the History and Doctrine of Episcopacy*, ed. Kenneth E. Kirk (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1946), 171–73; Peter R. Jones, “The Apostle Paul: A Second Moses According to 11 Corinthians 2:14–4:7,” Princeton Theological Seminary Dissertation (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1973), 40; Carol Kern Stockhausen, *Moses’ Veil and the Glory of the New Covenant: The Exegetical Substructure of 11 Cor. 3:1–4:6*, AnBib (Rome: Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1989), 82–86; Scott J. Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel: The Letter/Spirit Contrast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995), 39–110; Kuschnerus, *Gemeinde*, 174–75.

Lord, I am not fit” (οὐχ ἱκανὸς εἰμι, Exod 4:10); he claims that he is unfit for the commission because he is, “weak of voice (ἰσχνόφωνος) and slow of tongue (βραδύγλωσσος).” But, of course, the deity dismisses Moses’s objections, telling him, “Go now, and I will open your mouth and I will instruct you what to say” (4:12).

Moses’s response to the deity in Exod 4:10, οὐχ ἱκανὸς εἰμι (“I am not fit”), is indeed reminiscent of Paul’s “fitness” language throughout 2:16b–3:6, and particularly the apostle’s initial question, καὶ πρὸς ταῦτα τίς ἱκανός (and for these things who is fit?). God’s promise to Moses in Exod 4:12—that he will open Moses’s mouth and provide him with the appropriate response to Pharaoh—likewise resembles Paul’s claim in 3:5–6, that it was the deity himself who made the apostle fit to be a διάκονος. But is the resemblance of 2 Cor 2:16b–3:6 to Exodus 3 and 4 (and especially 4:10) coincidental or did Paul indeed intend to allude to that passage? It seems clear that the latter is the case; Paul meant for his fitness language (ἱκανός, ἱκανότης, ἱκανῶ) in 2 Cor 2:16b–3:6 to call to mind Exod 4:10. There are a number of reasons that affirm the presence of the allusion.

The first has to do with the larger context in which the “fitness” language of 2:16b appears. In the sections that will shortly follow, particularly 3:7–11 and 12–18, Paul will *explicitly* juxtapose his own ministry (διακονία) to the ministry of Moses. Based upon this fact alone, Paul’s *implicit* comparison of himself to the lawgiver from 2:17b through 3:6 makes good sense. By alluding to the Exodus passage, Paul anticipates his claim in 3:6 that God has made him, like Moses, fit for his task to function as the representative of the deity. Second, Paul’s clear allusions to the Torah within the same section (3:3)—particularly in the context of that document’s reception by Moses—also supports the contention that Paul meant to compare himself to Moses in 2:16b–3:6.²³ Third, in the last verse in which “fitness” language appears (3:6), Paul makes the claim that God has made him fit to be an envoy of a *new covenant* (καινῆς διαθήκης). The apostle’s reference to a “covenant” (διαθήκη) here argues for Paul’s allusion to the lawgiver’s commissioning in Exodus because of the obvious connection between Moses and the original covenant, especially in that book’s narrative.²⁴ For all these reasons therefore we can be relatively certain that the “fitness” language in 2:16b–3:6 was intended to allude to the commission of Moses in Exod 4:10. But why would Paul allude to the lawgiver here?

I suggest that Paul’s motivation for alluding to the call narrative in Exodus (as well as his references to Moses throughout the rest of 2 Corinthians 3)

23 We will look at this allusion more closely below.

24 Kuschnerus, *Gemeinde*, 174–75.

originated in response to the community’s negative opinion of him and in particular his poor physical state. From the standpoint of the Corinthians, Paul did not seem fit for his role as representative of the deity: his appearance was at best unimpressive and, as we have already seen, a later epistle (chapters 10–13) informs us that his speech was considered “contemptible” (10:10).²⁵

Paul’s response to such concerns is extraordinarily bold.²⁶ Within the first few sentences of his letter, he implicitly compares himself to Moses who, according to one of Paul’s Jewish contemporaries, was the envoy *par excellence*: “the divine prophet for the whole earth.”²⁷ According to Philo, another Jewish contemporary, Moses was a “friend of God . . . [in] partnership with the father and maker of all.”²⁸ Philo continues that, on Sinai, Moses had encountered the deity and he entered:

... into the darkness where God was, that is into the unseen, invisible, incorporeal, and archetypal essence of existing things. Thus he beheld what is hidden from the sight of mortal nature, and, in himself and his life displayed for all to see, he has set before us like some well-wrought picture, a piece of work beautiful and godlike, a model for those who are willing to imitate [him].²⁹

Philo here describes, in a remarkable way, the lawgiver as the exemplary mediator of the divine to humanity. After experiencing the divine realm—the “essence of existing things”—and after perceiving what was normally undetectable by other mortals, Moses became a model for those “willing to imitate [him].”

25 It is hardly accidental that Moses’s particular deficiency in the Exodus account is a speech impediment.

26 Hans-Michael Wünsch (*Der paulinische Brief 2 Kor 1–9 als kommunikative Handlung*, Theologie 4 [Münster: Lit, 1996], 244) suggests that there is rhetorical precedence for Paul’s introduction of Moses found in Aristotle. The latter recommends that in comparisons, one should compare someone to a famous person (*Rhetorica* 1. 9. 38).

27 *T. Mos.* 11:16. Similarly, the *Biblical Antiquities*, a work traditionally (but incorrectly) attributed to Philo, calls Moses, “the first of all prophets” (*LAB* 35:6).

28 Philo, *Moses* 1.156–58. For more on Hellenistic Judaism’s view of Moses, in particular the opinion of Philo, see Wayne A. Meeks, “Moses as God and King,” in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Goodenough*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1968); Hafemann, *Paul*, 63–71; idem, “Moses in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha: A Survey,” *JSP* 7 (1990): 79–104.

29 Philo, *Moses* 1. 155–58. Trans. Colson (LCL), slightly emended.

It is against such a background that Paul points to Exodus 4:10 with his language about fitness in 2:16b–3:6. The apostle views Moses as a particularly apt figure to whom he could compare himself because, not only was the lawgiver the paradigmatic envoy of God but also, according to Exodus 4, he was not originally *ἱκανός* (“fit”) to accomplish the task that God had set before him. Instead, he was made so by God.³⁰ As Moses’s lack of *ἱκανότης* was compensated for by the deity, so too, Paul claims that he likewise has been “made fit” (*ἱκάνωσεν*) by God (3:6).³¹ But, Paul not only alludes to Moses with the fitness language that he employs in 2:16b–3:6, he also alludes to him in 3:3 and 3:6, texts that we will explore later in this chapter. In the meantime, we will turn our attention to yet another topic that Paul raises in the early verses of his apology, letters of recommendation.

Concerns about Paul’s Honesty: Letters of Recommendation

Curiously, in the midst of Paul’s defense of his fitness, we encounter the topic of letters of recommendation (3:1–3). Why would the apostle focus on letters of recommendation here? Has he wandered off-topic?³² Furthermore, why does Paul insist that he has no need of such letters? And why does he claim that he already possesses a commendatory letter? The question about letters of

30 As mentioned above, God promised to “open his mouth,” give him the words to say to Pharaoh (Exod 4:12). He also gave Moses the power to perform miracles (4:1–9).

31 Paul’s insistence in 3:5–6 that God is the agent responsible for Paul’s fitness corresponds to his contention elsewhere in the apology that his commissioning comes from God. For example, in 2:17, he counters the suspicion that he peddles the word of God (*καπηλεύοντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ*) not only with his claim that he acts in sincerity (*ὡς ἐξ εὐκρινείας*) but also with the assertion that he has been sent by the deity (*[ἐσμεν] ὡς ἐκ θεοῦ*). In 4:1, before his assertion that he has “renounced the shameful things that one hides; [refusing] to practice cunning or to falsify God’s word,” he contends that his commission has resulted from God’s mercy (“it is by God’s mercy [*ἡλεήθημεν*] that we are engaged in this ministry”). Similarly, in 5:18, the apostle declares that his mission, termed here “the ministry of reconciliation” (*ἡ διακονία τοῦ καταλλαγῆς*) has been bestowed upon him by God. However, probably Paul’s most dramatic claim appears in 4:6 where he connects God’s act of commissioning him with the deity’s act of creation, “For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” In other words, just in case the Corinthians had not taken Paul’s claims seriously up till now, he tells them here, “it is the very same God that created the universe who commissioned me!”

32 Some scholars have viewed 3:1–3 as a sort of parenthesis. See, for example, Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 192.

recommendation arises here, it is typically argued, because Paul’s apostolic rivals arrived in Corinth with impressive examples of such. But this solution is inadequate for reasons already discussed and so we must search for another answer.

The fact that Paul claims that he has no need of such letters strongly suggests that the Corinthians have asked him to produce them. But why would they want letters of recommendation for Paul. The simplest explanation has to do with Corinthian suspicions about the collection. Such suspicions, may have given rise to the request that Paul provide some kind of proof of his (and the collection’s) legitimacy. Letters of recommendation would be an easy way to accomplish this. In order to better understand the Corinthians’ request, we must first understand a bit more about the kinds of letters of recommendation that were employed at Paul’s time.

In Paul’s world, a number of different types of letters of recommendation existed. These letters can be divided into three categories: 1) letters of introduction, 2) letters of commission or authorization, and 3) intercessory letters. As we will see, one thing stands out in the various types. All of them, in one way or another, provide assurance of the trustworthiness (πίστις) of the person being recommended.

Types of Letters: Letters of Introduction

Most letters of recommendation were written to provide an introduction of one party that was unknown to another.³³ The handbook of Pseudo-Demetrius, composed in the first or second century BCE, provides a model for this type:

So-and-so, who is conveying this letter to you, has been tested by us and is loved on account of his trustworthiness (πίστιν). You will do well if you deem him worthy of hospitality both for my sake and his, and indeed for your own. For you will not be sorry if you entrust to him, in any matter you wish, either words or deeds of a confidential nature. Indeed, you, too, will praise him to others when you see how useful he can be in everything.³⁴

33 For the introductory letter of recommendation, see Clinton W. Keyes, “The Greek Letter of Introduction,” *AJP* 56 (1935): 28–44; Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, Library of Early Christianity 5 (Philadelphia, 1986), 153–65; and Hans-Joseph Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament*, trans. Daniel P. Bailey (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006), 72–77.

34 Trans. Abraham J. Malherbe (*Ancient Epistolary Theorists*, SBLBS 19 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988], 32–33).

As the model in the handbook illustrates, a vital element of such a letter was the writer's assurance of the trustworthiness (πίστις) of the person being recommended. In an age when communication was slow and unreliable, such letters—typically carried by the person being recommended—were consequential. For the recipient, the epistolary commendation provided assurance of the letter bearer's integrity. For the letter carrier, the commendation could assist him or her in obtaining a job or finding a patron. If travelling, such a letter could insure a warm reception and a safe place to spend the night.

Examples of the introductory type of letter appear in a number of places within the New Testament, including the Pauline corpus. For instance, in Rom 16:1–2, where Paul commends Phoebe, a διάκονος from Cenchreae.

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a minister (διάκονον) of the church at Cenchreae, so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints (ἄξιως τῶν ἁγίων), and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well.

Here, Paul asks the community to both welcome Phoebe and to supply her with any assistance that she might need. Obviously, on the surface, this commendation differs somewhat from the example presented in the handbook of Pseudo-Demetrius. On the one hand, the commendation is part of a larger letter and, on the other hand, Paul does not here overly praise Phoebe in the manner that Pseudo-Demetrius praises his imaginary letter bearer.³⁵ However, despite the apostle's seeming subdued praise for Phoebe, his affirmation of her role as διάκονος—the same title that he claims for himself—implies both her trustworthiness (πίστις) and her status within the movement. As a result, Paul suggests that she deserves to be welcomed in a manner ἄξιως τῶν ἁγίων (“fitting for the saints”). While introductory letters were the most common type of commendatory letter in Paul's world, it is unlikely that the community would have asked Paul for such since he and the Corinthians were already acquainted with one another.

Types of Letters: Letters of Commission or Authorization

Letters of commission or authorization represent a second type of letter of recommendation. Included would be those letters that the author of Acts alleges Paul carried with him to synagogues outside of Jerusalem in order to seize

35 It should be noted that there are many examples of epistolary commendations that do not constitute an entire letter or even the majority of one. See Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 155–56; Klauck, *Ancient Letters*, 76.

followers of Jesus (Acts 9:2).³⁶ While in some cases, letters of commission or authorization also served as letters of introduction, in other cases, the person being recommended was already known to the recipient. For example, Paul wrote a letter for Titus, commissioning him to complete the Corinthian collection (2 Cor 8:16–24).³⁷

¹⁶ But thanks be to God who put in the heart of Titus the same eagerness for you that I myself have. ¹⁷ For he not only accepted our appeal, but since he is more eager than ever, he is going to you of his own accord. ¹⁸ With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his proclaiming of the good news . . . ²² And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found eager in many matters, but who is now more eager than ever because of his great confidence in you. ²³ As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker in your service; as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ.²⁴ Therefore, openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.

Although in this part of 2 Corinthians 8, there is no indication that Titus and the community were known to each other, Paul's remarks earlier in the same letter indicate that they were acquainted. Titus, according to 8:6, had previously begun the collection in Corinth: “as [Titus] had already made a beginning, so he should also complete this generous undertaking among you.” Clearly, Paul's letter of recommendation for Titus had as its purpose not an introduction of Titus to the Corinthians but rather the authorization for Titus to complete the Corinthian collection. With this letter Paul authorizes Titus as his legal representative and commissions “the brothers” as approved members of the delegation (8:23).³⁸

The issue of trustworthiness (πίστις), so important in introductory letters of recommendation, clearly plays a large role in the letter of commission. It is possible that the Corinthians requested this type of commendatory letter from Paul (i.e., a letter indicating that Paul had been commissioned to take up a collection in Jerusalem). However, it is also possible that they had requested

36 Stowers includes such in his discussion of letters of recommendation (*Letter Writing*, 155) as does Klauck (*Ancient Letters*, 76). Some, however, have compared the letters mentioned in Acts 9:2 to royal letters. On this, see Pervo, *Acts*, 240, n. 57.

37 As 2 Cor 8:6 makes evident, Titus and the community were already acquainted.

38 Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, 78–82.

something more along the lines of an intercessory letter, the type that we will next examine.³⁹

Types of Letters: Intercessory Letters

Intercessory letters of recommendation took various forms; sometimes they pled for mercy on behalf of a person; at other times they requested aid for someone in difficulty; at still other times they offered needed assurance.⁴⁰ Undoubtedly, the best-known example of an intercessory letter is Paul's letter to Philemon. In this brief document, Paul asks Philemon—who had been wronged in some way by his slave Onesimus⁴¹—to welcome the latter back into his household:

⁸ ... though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty,
⁹ yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love—and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. ¹⁰ I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment. ¹¹ Formerly he was useless (ἄχρηστον) to you, but now he is indeed useful (εὐχρηστον) both to you and to me. ... ¹⁷ so, if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. ¹⁸ If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account.

39 The kind of letter requested would to some extent depend upon how one understands what happened at the meeting where the collection was originally conceived, i.e., the meeting in Jerusalem between Paul and the Pillars (Gal 2:1–10). If the collection was a condition insisted on by the Pillars, then it could certainly be said that they commissioned Paul to undertake it. But if, as suggested by Joubert, the collection was a product of benefit exchange, then things would look different (*Paul as Benefactor*, 73–115). Paul would not have been commissioned by the Pillars. Hence a commissioning letter may not have been appropriate.

40 The term “intercessory” as a label for this type of letter is used by Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 153–75.

41 It is unclear what Onesimus had done to offend Philemon. It has traditionally been assumed that Onesimus had run away from Philemon and found refuge with the apostle. Paul, in response, had sent Onesimus back to Philemon, asking the latter to deal with his slave kindly. But, it is more likely that Onesimus had instead committed some offense against Philemon and had appealed to Paul as an *amicus domini* (“friend of the master”) to intercede on his behalf. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Letter to Philemon: A New Translation and Commentary*, AB 34C (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 17–24.

In v. 11, Paul uses the term εὔχρηστον to pun on the slave’s name. His point is to indicate that Onesimus had changed his ways since Philemon had last seen him. Previously, the apostle suggests, Onesimus had not acted with integrity. While, as a slave, he was expected to be useful, he was not; “formerly, he was useless (ἄχρηστον).” But now, Paul insists, Onesimus has changed his ways. He has become useful (εὔχρηστον) and now lives up to his name (ὀνήσιμος = “useful”). Here, as we can see, Paul attests to Onesimus’ newfound integrity and consequently he entreats Philemon to welcome Onesimus back into his household.⁴²

Another letter, similar to Paul’s letter to Philemon, comes from Pliny. It concerns a freedman who had injured his patron, Sabinianus. In this letter, reproduced only in part below, Pliny pleads for mercy on behalf of the freedman:

Your freedman with whom you said you were angry has been with me; he threw himself at my feet and clung to me with as much submission as he could have done at yours. He earnestly requested me with many tears, and even with all the eloquence of silent sorrow, to intercede for him; in short, he convinced me by his whole behavior, that he sincerely repents of his fault. And I am persuaded he is thoroughly reformed, because he knows he was wrong.

I know you are angry with him, and I know too, it is not without reason; but mercy is never more worthy of praise than where there is the justest cause for anger. . . .⁴³

Here, Pliny strongly attests to the freedman’s repentance for the injury that he had inflicted. While Pliny affirms the justice of Sabinianus’s anger, he nevertheless pleads for mercy on the freedman’s behalf because the latter is now “thoroughly reformed” in his behavior. The freedman, Pliny insists, can now be trusted to act as he should.

Other kinds of intercessory letters sought not forgiveness for a wrong but rather help for someone in a difficult situation. A letter from by Brutus, composed in the spring of 43 (BCE) and sent to Cicero, provides us with a good

42 Of course, Paul also bases his appeal on the friendship between himself and Philemon. While he claims the ability to command Philemon (8), nevertheless, Paul puts that aside in order to make his appeal “on the basis of love” (9). Consequently, the apostle asks Philemon to welcome Onesimus home as if he were welcoming Paul himself (17). In order to further encourage Philemon to accept Onesimus back graciously, Paul offers to make up for any loss that Philemon might have suffered as a result of Onesimus’ actions (18).

43 Trans. William Melmoth, emended by Stanley Stowers in his *Letter Writing*, 160.

example of this kind of letter. In this letter, Brutus asks Cicero's help on behalf of a certain physician, Glyco, who had been charged—unjustly, in Brutus's opinion—with murder.⁴⁴ Shortly before the letter had been composed, the consul Pansa had been wounded in battle and had perished. By all appearances, Pansa had succumbed to the injuries he had received on the battlefield.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the quaestor Torquatus was not satisfied that Pansa's death could be satisfactorily explained in this way. He suspected instead that Pansa had been poisoned. Torquatus's sights fell on Glyco, Pansa's physician. Responding to Glyco's dire situation, Brutus asked to Cicero to intercede:

To you I most earnestly recommend Glyco, the physician of Pansa, who has a sister of our man Achilles for his wife. I hear he has fallen under Torquatus' suspicion in connexion with the death of Pansa, and is being kept in custody as a murderer. Nothing could deserve less credence, for to whom has Pansa's death dealt a worse disaster? Besides, he is steady and a worthy fellow (*modestus homo et frugi*) who, you would think, could not even be driven to crime by the prospect of gain. I beg you, yes, I beg you insistently (for our man Achilles is as much perturbed as the occasion demands), rescue him from detention and keep him safe. I consider this is as clear a case as any of a call to duty in a private affair.⁴⁶

In his appeal, Brutus first commends Glyco to Cicero. He summarizes the case and insists that the charges are erroneous for three reasons: Glyco's grief ("for to whom has Pansa's death dealt a worse disaster?"), his integrity ("he is steady and a worthy fellow"), and his lack of motive ("[he], you would think, could not even be driven to crime by the prospect of gain"). For our purposes, the second of the reasons, Glyco's integrity, is particularly important. By claiming that Glyco is a *modestus homo et frugi*, Brutus attests to the trustworthiness of the physician.

44 It should be noted that this recommendation is embedded in a longer letter that speaks about Cicero's son, delivers news, explains an accompanying letter, and asks Cicero to intercede for another friend, Flavius. It is clear from Brutus' letter that Glyco was not its bearer for the latter was currently in custody. It is, however, not clear whether Cicero and Glycon had previously been acquainted, although there is no reason to assume that they had been.

45 Pansa led the Republic's legions against the forces of Mark Antony at the battle of Forum Gallorum in northern Italy. Although wounded in the battle, Pansa nevertheless succeeded in defeating Antony.

46 Cicero, *Epistulae ad Brutum* 12 (1.6), Cary translation (LCL), slightly emended.

Another interesting and relevant example of this kind of letter also comes from the same pair of correspondents, although in this case the letter was sent from Cicero to Brutus.⁴⁷ This particular letter concerns an individual named Clodius, a person known to both the letter’s author and recipient.⁴⁸ According to what we can determine from the letter, Clodius’s loyalty to Brutus had been uncertain. Previously, he had been torn between his debt to Antony and his obligation to Brutus, Antony’s enemy.⁴⁹ Although Clodius ultimately sided with Brutus, some in the latter’s camp had apparently tried to drive a wedge between the two. Cicero, in response, wrote to Brutus to assure him of Clodius’ loyalty and integrity:

I have had the impression that [Clodius] suspects (and does so indeed to his own great distress) that his personal enemies have originated or rather transmitted to you some piece of news, so as to make you less well-disposed to him. It is not my habit, my dear Brutus—and I think you need not be told so—to make haphazard assertions about another man . . . but Clodius’ mind I have probed and tried and weighed up judiciously . . . [Clodius] has obtained promotion by favour of Antony, and Antony’s favour was actually inspired in large measure by you. So he would like Antony to come to no harm, provided we suffer none. But he realizes (for he is, as you know, anything but dull-witted) that it has come to this, that *both* parties cannot be secure. For this reason he prefers us to be so, indeed his remarks and his feelings in regard to you are most friendly. Therefore if anyone has represented him otherwise to you in a letter or in conversation, I beg you insistently to take my word in preference, seeing that I have better means of judging than his traducer (whoever he may be), and I have a greater affection for you. Let Clodius rank in your esteem as a good friend (*amicissimum*) and as a citizen of such worth (*civemque talem*) as his ample good sense and his abundant fortune ought to make him.⁵⁰

47 Curiously, this letter was composed at approximately the same time that the letter from Brutus to Cicero was written (spring of 43 BCE).

48 It is unclear who this Clodius was. D.R. Shackleton Bailey points out that he may or may not have been the same Appian Clodius who was the Prefect of Engineers under Appian Pulcher (*Cicero: Letters to Quintus and Brutus. Letter Fragments. Letter to Octavian. Invectives. Handbook of Engineering*, LCL [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002], 244).

49 As the letter states, Clodius owed his promotion both to Antony and to Brutus.

50 Cicero, *Epistulae ad Brutum* 13 (1.1).

In this letter, Cicero attempts to put to rest accusations made against Clodius regarding the latter's loyalty to Brutus. After recounting suspicions that someone may have tried to convince Brutus of Clodius's untrustworthiness, Cicero points out that Clodius—although grateful for Antony's help with his career—ultimately sided with Brutus. Cicero further points to the friendly feelings that Clodius has for Brutus and, drawing on his own relationship to Brutus, he asks the latter to trust him (i.e., Cicero), adding that he himself possessed the best vantage point on this affair. Finally, Cicero again affirms Clodius's friendship for Brutus and attests to his value as a citizen.

It is important to note that in this example, as in the previous one, an emphasis is placed on the integrity and worthiness of the individual being recommended. In the earlier example, Brutus not only gave assurances that Glyco was innocent of any charges having to do with Pansa's death, he also gave a number of reasons for Glyco's innocence, not the least of which was Glyco's integrity. In the current example, Cicero insists that Clodius is, in fact, a good friend (*amicissimus*) of Brutus as well as an upstanding citizen (*civis talis*). He also assures Brutus that Clodius' loyalty can be trusted regardless of any rumors that may have been spread about him. We will now turn our attention back to Paul's situation in Corinth. As we will see, the two intercessory letters of recommendation from the correspondence between Cicero and Brutus shed particular light on the issue of letters of recommendation in 2 Cor 3:1–3.

Letters of Recommendation and the Corinthian Community

How can we make sense of the issue of letters of recommendation in the early verses of Paul's apology (3:1b)? Margaret Mitchell has argued that Paul refers to letters of recommendation in 3:1 in response to Corinthian ire that arose as a result of the earlier letter (2 Corinthians 8). Mitchell contends that 2 Corinthians 8 angered the Corinthians in part because there Paul had penned recommendations for Titus and for the "brother who [was] famous among all the churches" (2 Cor 8:18–21) but had provided none for himself. The community had:

... apparently read [the] letter [contained in 2 Corinthians 8] as an arrogant overreaching of authority by Paul. In particular, his having written a letter of recommendation and authorization for Titus and the brother [had] led the Corinthians to ask what right or legitimacy Paul had to do so, when he had provided no such *letters* for himself. ... Who put *him* in charge of the collection which he was now describing as διακονουμένη

ὅφ' ἡμῶν (being served up by us,” 2 Cor 8:19, 20)? . . . From where does his ἱκανότης (“competency”) to write such a letter of reference and to organize such a collection come (2 Cor 3:5–6)?⁵¹

In other words, in their anger, the Corinthians began to wonder about Paul's own source of authority.⁵² Mitchell's suggestion is on the mark in two important respects. First, it correctly posits that the issue of letters of recommendation arose from *within* the community and was not at all tied to the arrival in Corinth of apostolic rivals (as so many others have argued). Second, her suggestion connects the issue of letters of recommendation to the collection for Jerusalem.

But I see Paul's situation as somewhat more desperate than does Mitchell. Based on what we observe in 2 Corinthians 3, it seems clear to me that Paul was not simply mounting a defense against Corinthian grumbling over his authority. Because some (maybe many) in the community believed that he intended to defraud them under the pretext of the collection (cf. 2:17; 7:2b), the community, I suggest, responded by requesting written guarantees of the apostle's integrity. Such assurances would take the form of letters of recommendation written by trusted third parties.⁵³ In other words, while Mitchell posits that the community was miffed that Paul had provided no letters of authorization for the collection, I argue that the Corinthians actually acted on their anger and insisted that he come up with some kind of commendatory letter(s).

What would the letters that the Corinthians requested of Paul have looked like? Although, as mentioned above, the Corinthians could have insisted on a letter of commission (such as we see in Paul's letter for Titus and the brothers in 2 Cor 8:16–22), it is also possible that the desired letter would take the form of an intercessory letter (specifically highlighting Paul's honesty and integrity) such as the letter written by Brutus, in which the charge against Glyco—the person being recommended—was dismissed as absurd by the recommender.⁵⁴ Something similar—a letter (or, perhaps, letters) written on

51 Mitchell, “Paul's Letters,” 331–32.

52 Mitchell, “Korintherbriefe,” 1692; idem, “Paul's Letters,” 334.

53 While it is impossible to know exactly who in the community made the request, it is conceivable that Paul's own supporters viewed this as a way to resolve the doubts about Paul within the community. Perhaps his supporters, having made little headway against the anti-Pauline forces, thought that a letter from one or more notable parties outside the community would quell the dispute and undermine the influence that Paul's detractors had gained (possibly as a result of the discontent caused by 2 Corinthians 8).

54 Of course, it would be a mistake to draw too sharp a distinction between these types of letters. There is no reason that a letter could not function in both roles.

behalf of the apostle, absolving him of the charges that had been raised against him—would perhaps have satisfied most members of the community. The letter composed by Cicero on behalf of Clodius might offer an even closer parallel to the type of letter that the Corinthians were seeking for the similarities between the circumstances surrounding Clodius and those faced by Paul are noteworthy. In both cases, malicious rumors had circulated. Clodius had been rumored to be disloyal, Paul, dishonest. In the case of each, the rumors seem to have resulted from the actions of a group of malcontents within each of the respective communities. As Cicero's letter to Brutus dismisses the rumors by attesting to Clodius' loyalty and insists on the latter's good intentions toward Brutus, the kind of letter(s) desired by the Corinthian community would likewise have been expected to scotch the rumors about Paul's alleged plot and bear witness to his integrity and his good intentions toward the Corinthian ἐκκλησία.

In sum, I suggest that Paul's focus on letters of recommendation in 3:1–3 can be easily and logically explained within the context of Corinthian suspicions about Paul's honesty (cf. 2:17; 4:2–3; 6:3; 7:2). It is particularly noteworthy that in 2:17 Paul insists upon his integrity by denying that he is “peddling the word of God” and, *in the very next verse*, he raises the subject of letters of recommendation (3:1). This conjunction could hardly be accidental. Rather, it strongly suggests that the community had indeed requested letters of recommendation as a guarantee of Paul's honesty. In light of their suspicions, the community likely let it be known to Paul that they would no longer cooperate with him to raise money for Jerusalem unless he provided them with commendatory letters from a trusted third party (or parties) assuring them of the apostle's πίστις.⁵⁵

55 Who would have been expected to write such letters, then, for Paul? Whose recommendation for Paul would the Corinthians have trusted? Since the collection was destined for Jerusalem, perhaps the community wanted the leaders of that community (i.e., the “Pillars”) to give them assurances that the project was legitimate and that Paul was honest. On the other hand, perhaps the Corinthians looked for letters from other Pauline communities. Such a request would help explain Paul's comment in 3:1, when he refers to letters of recommendation “from the Corinthians” (“surely we do not need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you or *from you*, do we?”). Perhaps, the community assumed that Paul would want letters from them when he moved to his next missionary field in the same way that he had requested letters from other churches (cf. Acts 18:27). That Paul indeed might want such a letter from the community is suggested by 1 Cor 16:6 where the apostle articulates his wish to be “sent on” to his next location by the Corinthians (ἵνα ὑμεῖς με προπέμψητε οὗ ἔαν πορεύωμαι). The “sending on” of the apostle would presumably have involved not only providing provisions but also letters of recommendation, assuming, of course, the existence of significant social connections between those in the

Excursus: The Connection between the Issues of Self-Commendation and Letters of Recommendation

Before we proceed to explore Paul's response to the community's request for letters of recommendation, particularly in 3:2–3, it is necessary to ask if there exists a connection between the apostle's mention of *self*-commendation at the beginning of 3:1 and *letters* of recommendation at the end of the verse. The fact that these two issues are mentioned together in the same verse suggests that a connection likely existed. But, as we saw in the previous chapter, Corinthian concerns about Paul's self-commendation probably arose originally in response to the apostle's practice of holding himself up as a model for the community to imitate in 1 Corinthians. How would that connect (if at all) with the issue of commendatory letters?

I suggest that, while the issue of self-commendation may have had its *origin* in Paul's practice of setting himself up as a model for the community to imitate (i.e., in 1 Corinthians), by the time that Paul wrote 2:14–7:4, the issue had probably developed into something more. It is likely that, with time, it came to have as much to do with allegations of dishonesty on Paul's part as with the apostle's habit of presenting himself as a model for the Corinthians to imitate.

There are a number of passages within 2:14–7:4 that support this suggestion. One appears in 4:2. There, the apostle's defensive claim about his integrity is closely tied to the issue of self-commendation. Within the same verse (4:2), Paul not only claims that he has “renounced the shameful things that one hides (τὰ κρυπτὰ τῆς αἰσχύνης),” that he refuses “to practice cunning (μὴ περιπατοῦντες ἐν πανουργίᾳ),” or “to falsify God's word (μὴ δὲ δολοῦντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ),” he also claims to commend himself. But, as we saw in the previous chapter, he redefines self-commendation in this verse as behaving in a manner that demonstrates one's integrity: “we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone before God.”

We see a similar connection between the issue of self-commendation and the claim of honest behavior in 2 Cor 5:12. Paul's assertion there—that he is not commending himself—immediately follows his insistence in the previous verse (5:11) that he both knows “the fear of the Lord” and that he acts openly before the deity (θεῷ δὲ πεφανερῶμεθα). This dual claim is, in turn, tied to his comments in the previous verse where he acknowledges that he (along with everyone else),

Corinthian community and the inhabitants of Paul's destination (for *προπέμπω* as a technical term for supplying someone for a journey, see Hock, *Social Context*, 79, n. 29; see also BAGD, s. ν.). Unfortunately, the answer to the question of whose letters would have satisfied the Corinthians is beyond our grasp.

...must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil (5:10).

In these two verses, Paul implies that his behavior is above board because he knows that he will face God's judgment.⁵⁶

Finally, Paul's mention of self-commendation in 6:4 appears in the context of the claim in the previous verse that, "[we are] giving cause for offense to no one in any way, so that [our] ministry not be blamed." Paul follows that claim with the insistence that, rather than giving any cause for offense, he instead commends himself as an envoy of the deity (συνιστάντες ἑαυτοὺς ὡς θεοῦ διᾶκονοι).⁵⁷ In short, he acts appropriately for the sake of his ministry.

In all of the places mentioned above, Paul strongly connects self-commendation to his insistence that he acts with integrity (i.e., he recognizes that he will be judged, he knows "the fear of the Lord," and he acts "before God"). It is unlikely that this connection is accidental. Instead, it suggests that at some point a link developed between the earlier issue of self-commendation and later suspicions about the collection. The resentment felt by some following 1 Corinthians likely spread as a result of the collection letter of 2 Corinthians 8. The issue of self-commendation was probably originally viewed as arrogance. Some in the community probably wondered (perhaps out loud): "who does that insignificant little tentmaker think he is, presenting *himself* as a model for *our* behavior?" But this concern eventually came to be tied to suspicions about his integrity. Paul was viewed, like other charlatans of his day, as a self-promoter with no real proof of his integrity. One can easily imagine the Corinthians expressing themselves in this regard: "he commends himself well enough but see if anyone else will vouch for him!"

In sum, in the context of 2:14–7:4, it seems evident that the community's suspicions about Paul's character were exacerbated by his lack of external references and what was viewed as his self-promotion. By the time that Paul wrote 2:14–7:4, therefore, the issues of self-commendation and letters of recommendation came to represent two sides of the same coin. Both focused on Paul's identity and integrity. The Corinthians saw that Paul was all too willing

56 The connection between 5:10 and 5:11–12 is made evident by the appearance of the term οὖν ("therefore") in 5:11. Barrett interprets these verses as follows: "so far as we are to be judged by our deeds we may well be afraid of what is to come. It is in this fear that we persuade ([or] perhaps: we try to persuade) men" (Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 163).

57 Cf. Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 455.

to commend himself. They, however, wanted assurances from someone else. Consequently, they demanded letters, persuading them of Paul's honesty.

“You Are Our Letter”

Paul did not accede to the Corinthian desire for letters, at least in the way that the community expected. From the apostle's perspective, as his question at the end of 3:1 implies, no such letters were necessary. Rather, as Paul tells the Corinthians:

^{3:2} You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; ³ and you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.⁵⁸

Following the first assertion that the community represents his letter (3:2), Paul employs two participial phrases that elaborate on the image of the community-as-letter.⁵⁹ The first states that it is, “written on our hearts” (ἐγγεγραμμένη ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν) and the second, that it is, “known and read by all” (γινωσκομένη καὶ ἀναγινωσκομένη ὑπὸ πάντων ἀνθρώπων).⁶⁰

58 The assertion that the Corinthians are Paul's letter of recommendation calls to mind two similar claims that the apostle had made, one in 1 Cor 9:1–2 and the other in 1 Thess 2:19–20. In the first, Paul had asked the Corinthians: “. . . Are you not my work in the Lord (οὐ τὸ ἔργον μου ὑμεῖς ἐστε ἐν κυρίῳ)? If I am not an apostle to others, at least I am to you; for you are the seal (σφραγίς) of my apostleship in the Lord.” In 1 Thess 2:19, Paul asks the following questions, “for what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?” In the verse immediately following (1 Thess 2:20), the apostle reaffirms the implied affirmative answer by making the claim, “Yes, you are our glory and joy!” The similarity of 1 Thess 2:19–20 to 1 Cor 9:1–2 is apparent despite their minor difference. In the Thessalonian text, the community represents not the “seal of [Paul's] apostleship,” but rather his “crown of boasting” before Jesus at the parousia (cf. 2 Cor 1:14).

59 One can understand the first phrase, “you are our letter,” as representing the primary metaphor, while the participial phrases supply a sub-metaphor, that of a “letter written on a heart” (Kuschnerus, *Gemeinde*, 154–55).

60 **Σ** and a few other witnesses read ὑμῶν rather than ἡμῶν in the first phrase. That variant has been adopted by some commentaries, including Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 71; Jean Héring, *The Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, trans. A.W. Heathcote and P.J. Allcock (London: Epworth, 1967), 21, n. 2; Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 96, n. 3; and Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 223–24 (cautiously). But, ἡμῶν is much better attested and, as a result,

The first claim calls a couple of things to the reader's attention. First, the phrase "written on our hearts" recalls Jer 38:33 (LXX)—a passage that we will examine in detail below. This text, like 2 Cor 3:2, speaks of heart-written texts. Second, the first phrase also calls to mind a similar line in 1 Thess 2:17–18, where the apostle mentions the Thessalonian community in connection with his own heart. In the latter text, Paul claims that he is separated from the members of the community physically (προσώπῳ), but "not in heart" (οὐ καρδίᾳ). Paul's use of the term "heart" in 1 Thessalonians points to the apostle's enduring affection for the community despite his separation from them. In the same way, his reference to the Corinthian community as inscribed on his heart in 2 Cor 3:2 communicates the deep affection that the apostle feels for the Corinthians.⁶¹

With the introduction of the second participial phrase, γινωσκομένη καὶ ἀναγινωσκομένη ὑπὸ πάντων ἀνθρώπων ("known and read by all"), Paul makes an important shift. While the previous expression ("written in our hearts") concentrates on Paul's internal state, this phrase shifts the focus to the public sphere. Paul displays the community that is "written on his heart" to everyone; his letter is "known and read by all."⁶² In light of the processional imagery

there is no good reason to consider the variant. For a helpful discussion, see Furnish, *11 Corinthians*, 181.

- 61 Paul will return to similar heart imagery towards the end of the letter, in 2 Cor 6:11, where he tells them, "our heart is wide open to you." For a Pauline passage that indicates the *community's* affection for Paul (vs. Paul's affection for the community as we see in 2 Cor 3:2 and 1 Thess 2:17–18), see Phil 1:7.
- 62 Curiously, the conjunction of the last phrase, "known and read by all" (3:2c) with the previous one, "written on our hearts" (3:2b) creates some obvious tension due to the seeming incompatibility of these statements. In the earlier expression, the reference to the location of the letter, Paul's heart, highlights the human organ that normally represents the inner recesses of an individual's being, usually thought accessible only to the individual him or herself and the deity. However, in the second phrase, Paul describes the letter as available for all to read (Kuschnerus, *Gemeinde*, 155). As such, Paul's use of the image of his heart-inscribed letter, "known and read by all" serves to demonstrate the apostle's openness. That which is normally inaccessible to others (i.e., that which is in Paul's heart) in this case is available for all to read. In this regard, the similarity of 3:2 to 6:11 should be noted for in the latter, Paul asserts: "Our heart is wide open to you" (ἡ καρδία ἡμῶν πεπλάτνται). But, despite the similarity of these passages, the difference is also apparent. The later text refers only to the Corinthians (for whom his heart is wide open) while the former (3:3) points to a much broader public. Cf. Anacleto de Oliveira, *Die Diakonie der Gerechtigkeit und der Versöhnung in der Apologie des 2. Korintherbriefes: Analyse und Auslegung von 2 Kor 2,14–4,6; 5,11–6,10*, NTAbh 21 [Neue Folge] (Münster: Aschendorff, 1990), 58; Wünsch, *Paulinische Briefe*, 240–41.

introduced several verses earlier (in 2:14–15), Paul’s reference to his letter of recommendation (i.e., the community), written on his heart for all to see can also be interpreted along similar lines. While processions served any number of functions in the ancient world, for our purposes, it is important to recognize their role in *putting things on display*, whether those things were enemy prisoners destined for execution, booty captured in battle, symbols of a deity, scenes depicting the beneficent activities of the gods, or the gods themselves.

Paul’s “Letter” and the Metaphor of the Cultic Procession

Ancient religious processions, both military triumphs as well as “triumphal” epiphany processions, allowed for significant variation, particularly with respect to the elements carried and displayed to onlookers. Besides the standard elements—such as the vanquished prisoners in a military triumph or the deity’s statue in an epiphany procession—other objects also frequently appeared. These included (among other things) paintings, sacred objects, or even *tableaux vivant*.⁶³ The reason for the display of such objects was to remind the onlookers of the extraordinary deeds of the triumphator, whether it be a conquering general (in the case of a military triumph) or the victorious deity (in the case of a “triumphal” epiphany procession).

At times, such processions also displayed texts of one sort or another to those viewing the spectacle. For example, in military triumphs, placards appeared.⁶⁴ These placards might announce the glorious deeds of a conquering general, such as the number of kings who had been taken captive, the number of ships seized, or other booty obtained in the course of the campaign.⁶⁵ In one famous case—that of Julius Caesar’s triumph over Pharnaces of Pontus—a placard displayed the now-famous words of the triumphator, “veni, vidi, vici.”⁶⁶ Other examples of texts that appeared at various times in these processions include the royal library of Mithradates, displayed during Pompey’s triumph

63 For two examples of epiphany processions featuring the great variety of objects displayed, see the extraordinary procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus in Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae*. 197C–203B and the Isis ship procession in Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 11.8–16.

64 Images of placards in a Roman triumphal procession can be easily seen on the Arch of Titus. For a photo, see Beard, *Roman Triumph*, 49, fig. 9.

65 Cf. Appian, *Historia romana* 12. 117.

66 Suetonius *Divus Julius*. 37.

of 61 BCE,⁶⁷ and a Torah scroll, carried in the triumph of Vespasian and Titus following the Roman-Jewish war.⁶⁸

The image of the community written on Paul's heart and carried in the deity's "triumph" for all to see metaphorically expresses the idea that, through the conversion of the community (i.e., their "conquest" by the deity), the power of God—i.e., the salvation of the Corinthians achieved through the crucifixion of God's son—was displayed for all to see.⁶⁹ The metaphorical depiction of the "letter of Christ" (i.e., the conversion of the community) carried in procession by Paul and "known and read by all" can be further illuminated by a scene from the Isis procession (described by Apuleius) that we looked at earlier in this chapter.⁷⁰ This scene narrates the conversion of Lucius.

During the course of that procession, Lucius (the protagonist of the story who had been turned into an ass) is offered a garland of roses—the antidote to his asinine shape—by a priest of Isis. As he eats the roses, he is changed back into human form again. The viewers of the procession are astonished. As Lucius narrates:

The people marveled, and the devotees expressed their adoration of such a manifest token of the highest deity's power as well as her easy skill in achieving my transformation. This they did with clear voices in unison, raising their hands to heaven and acclaiming the radiant blessing bestowed by the goddess (11.13).

Once transformed, Lucius himself joins the procession, "so that I was plain and prominent for the whole populace to see" (11.16). Lucius' role in the procession is underlined by the priest who had facilitated his transformation:

67 Pliny, *Naturalis historia*. 25.7. See Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, 12.

68 Josephus, *Bellum judaicum* 7.132–52. A somewhat similar reference to a text can be seen in a "triumphal" epiphany procession. At the conclusion of the Isis procession—heralding the opening of the navigational season—described in the final chapter of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, onlookers viewed the *navigium Isidis* ("the vessel of Isis"), on whose sail was written hieroglyphics. The vessel was consecrated by the high priest and then set adrift.

69 Of course, the notion that this message was written on Paul's heart conveys the idea of Paul's involvement.

70 As we will see below, the community-as letter inscribed on Paul's heart and the "letter of Christ" represent one and the same letter.

Let the unbelievers take note, let them take note and acknowledge their mistake: behold, here is Lucius! He has been freed from his former sufferings and, rejoicing in the providence of the mighty Isis, he is victorious over his Fortune (11.15).

As a result of his transformation and subsequent participation in the procession, Lucius attracts the attention of the bystanders:

Men pointed to me with their fingers and nodded their heads. All the people were talking about me: “This is the man who has been today restored to human shape through the splendid divinity of the all-powerful goddess. Happy is he, by heaven, and thrice blessed, to have clearly deserved . . . such a wondrous favor from heaven that he is, as it were, born again and has at once pledged himself to service in the sacred rites” (11.16).

The role that Lucius plays in the Isis procession clearly helps illuminate Paul’s image in 2 Cor 3:2–3. Just as Lucius’s transformation served to display the salvific power of Isis to those watching her procession, so too Paul insists that displaying the “letter of Christ” in his metaphorical procession demonstrates the transformative power of the Christ event to would-be converts. The *ἐκκλησία* in Corinth, like Lucius in Apuleius’ novel, comes to function as an example of the power of the deity for others. Just as the viewers of the Isis procession marveled at Lucius’s transformation, so too those evangelized by Paul (i.e., the viewers of the procession in which the apostle displays the salvific power of his deity) marvel at the transformation of the Corinthian community.⁷¹

It is important to note that the final expression of 2 Cor 3:2 (that the community-as-letter is “known and read by all”), while continuing the processional imagery, also functions as a subtle rebuttal of the charge that Paul’s actions—particularly, those focused on the collection—have been secretive. As such, this image looks forward to the apostle’s claim in 3:12 that, unlike Moses, Paul employs *πολλή παρρησία*.⁷² However, unlike the later claim, Paul’s assertion here that his letter is “known and read by all” is made with

71 Cf. Paul’s comments in 1 Thess 1:7 (“...you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia”) and Rom 1:8 (“...your faith is proclaimed throughout the world”).

72 As we will see below, the term *παρρησία* in this context connotes openness as well as boldness.

considerable irony. That is to say, Paul's missionary success—made evident by the creation and continued existence of the Corinthian community—while recognized by all, was not, it seems, universally acknowledged within the Corinthian community.

The Letter of Christ and the Torah

In 3:3, Paul describes the community as a “letter of Christ, ministered by us” (ἐστὲ ἐπιστολὴ Χριστοῦ διακονηθεῖσα ὑφ’ ἡμῶν). In the previous verse, he had claimed that the community was *his* letter of recommendation. What accounts for the difference? Although some have argued that Paul abandons the former metaphor in 3:3 (i.e., the community as *his* letter of recommendation) in order to switch to another—specifically, the metaphor of the heavenly letter—such an interpretation seems forced.⁷³ Instead, it is more likely that the image of the letter of Christ in 3:3 functions as a kind of commentary on Paul's description of the community as his letter of recommendation in the previous verse.⁷⁴ That is to say that Paul's description of the community as “a letter of Christ” functions to remind the Corinthians that his “letter of recommendation”—the existence of the community itself—has ultimately come about, not because of the apostle but because of Christ.⁷⁵ *Christ* is the author of the community-as-text. It has merely been “ministered” (διακονηθεῖσα) by Paul.⁷⁶

73 For examples of such heavenly texts, see Ezek 2:9–10; Revelation 2 and 3; *Herm. Vis.* 2:2; 3:3–4:1; *Odes Sol.* 23. Among those who have argued that the “heavenly letter” idea is present in 2 Cor 3:3 are Windisch, *zweite Korintherbrief*, 105; Lietzmann, *An die Korinther I–II*, 110; Georgi, *Opponents*, 246. Lietzmann, arguing along these lines, has suggested that Paul no longer has his letter of recommendation in view here but rather the gospel itself (*An die Korinther I–II*, 110–11).

74 In terms of structure and vocabulary, 2 Cor 3:3 reflects the first two phrases in 3:2. The following parallelism is present:

3:2 ἡ ἐπιστολὴ ἡμῶν ἡμεῖς ἐστέ, ἐγγεγραμμένη ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν . . .

3:3 . . . ὁ ἐστὲ ἐπιστολὴ . . . ἐγγεγραμμένη . . . ἐν πλαξίν καρδίαις σαρκίναῖς

75 Cf. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 194; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 225–26.

76 There has been significant speculation about the meaning of this term as either meaning “written,” in the sense that Paul was the amanuensis of the letter, dictated by Christ (e.g., Thrall, *Second Corinthians*, 225) or the one who delivered it (e.g., Windisch, *zweite Korintherbrief*, 105; Lietzmann, *An die Korinther I–II*, 110). Paul's use of the verb διακονέω is rare, appearing in only Rom 1:25 (in connection with the collection) and Phlm 13. The former usage suggests the possibility that Paul uses the verb here because of the controversy about the collection since the noun διακονία is found in Paul's label for the endeavor (i.e., ἡ διακονία τῆς εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους). Thanks go to Margaret Mitchell for this suggestion.

Following Paul's description of the community as a "letter of Christ," the apostle details the characteristics of that commendatory "letter." The community-as-letter, he insists, has been "written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (3:3b). It is clear, based on the scriptural allusions within this passage, that the characteristics that Paul ascribes to his commendatory letter indicate his intent to set it (i.e., the transformed community) over against the Torah.⁷⁷ But is Paul's purpose in 3:3 to compare or to contrast his letter to the Torah? Scholars have typically opted for the latter. They have usually presumed that, by means of these scriptural references, Paul had intended to draw a contrast to the Torah in order to, in some way, debase it and/or oppose its observance. We will return to this question when we examine the different allusions in 3:3. However, before we do that, it is necessary to address first Paul's use of scripture and, in particular, his employment of scriptural allusions.

Paul's Use of Scripture

When reading Paul's letters, how should we make sense of the apostle's scriptural allusions? This is both an important question and, at the same time, an extremely difficult one to answer. In his influential book, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, Richard Hays has persuasively argued that Paul should be understood in the context of a tradition of Jewish "intertextual discourse." That is to say, the apostle's use of scripture should not be understood in isolation, but rather, within the context of a larger text-focused movement that began with the scripture writers themselves.⁷⁸ Hays contends that the writers of scripture and the interpreters who later followed them were both conveyers *and* interpreters of their traditions. While they passed on their traditions,

77 With the recognition of scriptural allusions in 3:3, we can see here an interesting interplay of images. On the one hand, Paul implicitly describes the community-as-letter with imagery taken from pagan ritual practice (i.e., processions). But, on the other hand, he sets the community-as-letter over against the Torah. What accounts for Paul's quick shift from pagan religion to the Torah? It seems that the juxtaposition in 3:3 (between the letter of Christ and the Torah) allows Paul to transition back to the figure of Moses so that, once again, he is implicitly associated with the lawgiver. But this juxtaposition, like that between Paul and Moses that emerges from the fitness language, is subtle. While Paul will more directly highlight the comparison between himself and the lawgiver a few verses later, at this point, he is content to allude to the "texts" that have resulted from the διακονία of each: the Torah from the ministry of Moses and the letter of Christ (i.e., the Corinthian community-as-letter) from his own.

78 Hays here acknowledges the work of Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985).

they also framed those traditions in such a way as to address their own specific situations. In this regard, Hays insists, Paul was no different than other Jewish interpreters of their tradition. The apostle viewed his role as one who proclaimed the message of the God of Israel, while interpreting that message in light of the new situation in which he found himself.⁷⁹

From Paul's perspective—like that of the other Jewish members of the early Jesus movement—the scriptures were only appropriately read in the context of the death and resurrection of the Messiah Jesus.⁸⁰ Consequently, the “original intention” of the biblical text—something of enormous importance to current readers—was of absolutely no interest to the apostle.

By correlating God's word to Israel with the new circumstances of his churches and the content of his keygma, [Paul] generates novel interpretations that nonetheless claim to be the true, eschatologically disclosed sense of the ancient texts. Even passages that might have seemed perspicuous, such as Deut 30:11–14, turn out to have a concealed meaning manifest only in Paul's inspired reading, a meaning that neither Moses nor Ezra could have guessed and that Paul himself could never have imagined before his own turning. Now, however, that latent meaning turns out to be the hermeneutical key that unlocks all the mysteries of God's revelation in the past. . . . The gospel that Paul preaches is—so he contends—the hidden meaning of the word that was always near Israel.⁸¹

Hays's perceptive analysis of Paul within the tradition of Jewish intertextual discourse—that is, both as the transmitter and the interpreter of his tradition—allows us to understand Paul's sometimes seemingly bizarre use of biblical texts, as, for example, in his reinterpretation of Deut 30:11–14 in Rom 10:5–8.

79 Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 14.

80 In this regard, Paul privileged his own interpretation of the scriptures over that of all his Jewish contemporaries. From his standpoint, as he himself makes clear in 2 Cor 3:14–15, a veil lay over his Jewish contemporaries' reading of the scriptures. But his own reading of scripture was unveiled. That is to say, for Paul, the scriptures still represented the divine word (cf. Rom 3:2). They were to be taken seriously. In the words of Daniel Boyarin, by appealing to the abolition of the veil for those “in Christ” in 2 Cor 3:14, “[Paul could not] mean, of course, that the text of the Torah has been abolished, so therefore, he must mean that the literal meaning is what will be abolished” (*A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, *Contraversions* 1 [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994], 104).

81 Hays, *Echoes*, 154–55.

But if we assume that Paul's writings proclaim the *hidden* meaning of scriptural texts, how then can we understand Paul's intended meaning when he quotes or alludes to a particular scriptural passage? Fortunately, with many of his scriptural allusions, Paul supplies sufficient information to make his intentions clear.⁸² In some cases, however, such as 2 Cor 3:3, Paul's intent is not so apparent. Rather, it is incumbent on the reader to work out Paul's intended meaning by imagining how the apostle would have interpreted a particular scriptural text, based both on the context of the argument in which the allusion or quotation appears and on how he may have “[correlated] God's word to Israel with the new circumstances of his churches and the content of his keygma.”⁸³ This is precisely what we will attempt to do with the scriptural allusions that appear in 2 Cor 3:3.

Scriptural Allusions in 2 Cor 3:3

In 2 Cor 3:3, Paul reiterates his claim that the community is a letter, “written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but in tablets of human hearts.” Virtually all scholars agree that Paul here alludes to three texts from scripture: Exod 31:18, Jer 38:33 (LXX), and Ezek 36:26. But, why does he point to these particular texts? In order to answer this question, we will look at each of the texts in turn.

The first to be considered in Exod 31:18, a verse that appears in the context of Moses' original ascent to Mount Sinai. It states:

82 For example, in 1 Corinthians 10, Paul alludes to the Exodus narrative of Israel's journey through the wilderness. From the various references early on in Paul's text—such as Israel being “baptized into Moses” (10:2), eating “spiritual food” (10:3), and drinking “spiritual drink” (10:4)—it quickly becomes apparent to Paul's readers that he intends to inform them of the *hidden* meaning of scripture by creating a typology (cf. 10:6): just as Israel was “baptized” (while crossing the Sea of Reeds) and nourished by God in the wilderness, so too the Corinthians have been baptized and are now spiritually nourished by the Eucharist. Having created the typology, Paul can then make his point: just as many of the Israelites “were struck down in the wilderness” because of their idolatry (1 Cor 10:5), so too, the Corinthians should “flee from the worship of idols” (10:14)—i.e., εἰδωλόθυτα (“meat sacrificed to idols”)—lest the same fate befall them. Cf. Christopher D. Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture: The Rhetoric of Quotations in the Letters of Paul* (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 86–88.

83 The quotation is from Hays, *Echoes*, 154, cited above. A further complication that should be noted involves the scriptural literacy of Paul's audience. Given the limitations of this study, however, I will not address this here. For a good discussion of the problems that Paul's audience may have faced when confronted with Paul's use of scripture, see Stanley, *Arguing*.

And when [God] had stopped speaking to [Moses] on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets (δύο πλάκας) of the testimony, stone tablets (πλάκας λιθίνας) written by the finger of God (γεγραμμένας τῷ δακτύλῳ τοῦ θεοῦ).

It can hardly be doubted that Paul's mention of the "stone tablets" (πλάκες λιθίνοι) and his expression, "written by the Spirit of the living God (ἐγγεγραμμένη . . . πνεύματι θεοῦ ζῶντος) in 2 Cor 3:3 point to the concluding phrase in the Exodus passage, a passage that describes the two tablets of the Torah as "stone tablets written by the finger of God." It seems obvious that Paul points to this text in order to bring the Torah into his argument.⁸⁴ But for what reason? Earlier we had asked if Paul intended to draw a comparison or a contrast between the Torah and the letter of Christ. Curiously, with this allusion, Paul seems to do *both*.

As the apostle himself makes clear—with his use of οὐ and ἀλλά in 3:3—he intends an obvious contrast between the stone tablets of the Torah and his own "letter" of recommendation, a "letter" that is inscribed on "tablets" that are hearts (ἐν πλαξὶν καρδίαις). But in what sense is this contrast meant? Thrall proposes that Paul's "letter" and the Torah are juxtaposed by the apostle here, "in such a way as to [emphasize] the superiority of Christian existence to life under the Law of Moses."⁸⁵ But, given the absence of any evidence for Judaizing activity in Corinth, this suggestion makes little sense. It is much more likely that the contrast has nothing to do with Torah observance but—as 3:3 itself indicates—it has to do with the materials *on which* each text was written.⁸⁶ According to Exod 31:18, the Torah was inscribed on stone tablets. But Paul's "text"—the letter of Christ (i.e., the Corinthian community)—was inscribed

84 Besides the juxtaposition between Paul's "letter" and the Torah, there is another contrast that appears in 3:3a, the contrast between ink and "the Spirit of the living God." This particular contrast appears not to refer to Paul's "letter" and the Torah but rather it points back to 3:1b reasserts the contrast set up between 3:1b and 3:2, the contrast between a normally written letter of recommendation (ink on papyrus) versus Paul's "letter" of recommendation (i.e., the Spirit on the human heart).

85 Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 226. Furnish has suggested that Paul sets up this contrast because he does "not want to identify the law with the *content* of Christ's letter" (*II Corinthians*, 196).

86 Kuschnerus suggests that the heart-written text represents the primary metaphor and the Spirit as the medium by which it was written, the sub-metaphor (*Gemeinde*, 169).

on human hearts—specifically, as indicated in the previous verse—on the heart of the apostle.⁸⁷

Besides this *contrast*, however, Paul also sets up a *comparison* between his “letter” and the Torah. While, as we have seen, he explicitly contrasts the material on which each “text” is inscribed, he nevertheless implicitly draws a comparison whose focus is on the “implement” with which each is written. In 3:3, Paul describes his “letter” as having been “written . . . with the Spirit of the living God” (ἐγγεγραμμένη . . . πνεύματι θεοῦ ζῶντος). Given the close similarity of this phrase with the phrase appearing in Exod 31:18—where the Torah is described as “written by the finger of God” (γεγραμμένος τῷ δακτύλῳ τοῦ θεοῦ)—there can be little doubt that a *comparison* between the Torah and the community-as-letter is indeed intended here.⁸⁸ Consequently, Paul’s allusion to Exodus 31:18 in 2 Cor 3:3 makes the important, but usually neglected, point that *both* texts, Paul’s “letter” as well as the Torah, are divinely authored.

Paul’s allusion to Exod 31:18 can then be said to serve two specific purposes. First, it suggests a *comparison* between the two texts under discussion (Paul’s “letter” and the Torah). The striking similarity between the phrases “written by the finger of God” (with regard to the Torah) in Exod 31:18 and “written by the Spirit of the living God” (with regard to Paul’s “letter”) in 2 Cor 3:3 stresses the common authorship of the two documents. But while this allusion points to the common authorship of the texts, it also emphasizes the *contrast* between the materials upon which each document was inscribed—tablets of stone in the case of the Torah and the flesh of a human heart in the case of the letter of Christ. The former type of writing material (stone) was, of

87 There may be some slippage here in Paul’s metaphorical imagery. In 3:2, it is clear that it is Paul’s heart that is inscribed. In 3:3 however, it is possible that the writing is on the hearts of the Corinthians. We will consider this below.

88 While on the surface, although there might appear to be a difference between the “Spirit of . . . God” and the “finger of God,” in reality, the terms are functionally equivalent. Both the “Spirit” and the “finger” of God point to the means by which the deity acts in the world. The functional equivalency of the “Spirit” and the “finger” of God is clearly illustrated by the evangelist Matthew’s variation of Q 11:20. In what was likely the original Q text, Jesus tells his detractors that he exorcises not by the power of Beelzebul but “by the finger of God.” Matthew, wanting to use a more common descriptor (or perhaps a less anthropomorphic one), changes the phrase “finger of God” to “Spirit of God” (Matt 12:28). For “finger” as the original term, see James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, and John S. Kloppenborg, *The Critical Edition of Q: Synopsis Including the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark and Thomas with English, German, and French Translations of Q and Thomas*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 232.

course, common in Paul's time and would have been understood as one of the "normal" materials on which a text could be inscribed. The extraordinary nature of the other writing material (human hearts), however, would have immediately recalled the apostle's earlier use of the same metaphor, in the previous verse (where he describes the community as his heart-written letter). It would have also called to his readers' minds another scriptural text, Jer 38:33 (mentioned above). Before we can discern the significance of Paul's contrast between stone tablets and tablets of flesh, we need to look at that text.

In Jer 38:33 (LXX), the prophet speaks of both human minds and hearts as texts:

This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after these days," says the Lord. "I will put my laws into their thoughts (εἰς τὴν διάνοιαν αὐτῶν) and I will write them on their hearts (ἐπὶ καρδίας αὐτῶν γράψω αὐτούς).⁸⁹

Paul's primary motivation for appealing to this text focuses on Jeremiah's implicit notion that internally written laws are superior to those that are externally inscribed. Since Israel did not pay sufficient attention to the written Torah (i.e., the Torah inscribed in stone or written on scrolls), the prophet foretells that, in the future, God's laws would be internally inscribed on their minds and hearts.

While Jeremiah speaks of one text (the Torah) in two different forms (externally and internally inscribed), the apostle interprets the prophet to address his own (and his community's) current situation. His heart-inscribed "letter" of recommendation—that is to say, the very presence of the gentile community at Corinth—represents the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy of a heart-written (new) covenant.⁹⁰ Consequently, based upon this and also the commonplace notion that such internally inscribed "texts" rank superior to normally inscribed texts, Paul implicitly suggests that his own internally

89 Some doubt has been expressed about the presence of the allusion by Hafemann (*Suffering*, 193–4, 205–7). Similarly Lambrecht acknowledges the allusion only as a probability (*Second Corinthians*, 42). In favor of the allusion are, among others, Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 82; Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 72; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 183; Hays, *Echoes*, 128–29; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 226.

90 Cf. 2 Cor 3:6.

written letter of recommendation takes precedence over the externally (i.e., normally) written Torah.⁹¹

With this in mind, we will now turn to the third scriptural allusion, the allusion to Ezek 36:26. The Ezekiel text states:

And I will give you a new heart and I will give you a new spirit and I will remove the stone heart from your flesh and I will give you a human heart (καρδίαν σαρκίνην).⁹²

The presence of Paul's allusion to this text is made evident by the occurrence of both the stone-flesh contrast and the appearance of the phrase καρδιά σαρκίνη in both Ezek 36:26 and 2 Cor 3:3. However, as it is often interpreted, this allusion represents a fundamentally different sort of allusion than the other two that we have already examined. This is because, so it is argued, the allusions to Exod 31:18 and Jer 38:33 suggest a positive (or at very least, non-negative) understanding of the Torah, while the allusion to Ezekiel functions to overturn any positive assessment of the Torah that one might entertain as a result of reading Paul's text.⁹³ Consider, for example, Thrall's analysis of the allusion:

[Paul's] addition of σαρκίνας to καρδίαις [in 2 Cor 3:3] recalls the promise . . . that God's people will be given a new “heart of flesh” to replace their old “stony heart.” . . . In this context, the word λίθινος acquires a figurative, and pejorative, connotation, i.e., “lacking feeling,” whilst the “heart of flesh” is the sensitive feeling heart. In 2 Cor 3:3, the allusion to this contrast in Ezekiel may have the effect of injecting a pejorative sense into the “stone tablets” of the Decalogue.⁹⁴

91 The notion that internally inscribed “texts” are superior to externally written texts is found, for example, in Plato, *Phaedr.* 276A–C; Thucydides 2.43.3; and Isocrates *Areop.* 41. The notion is also found in a few places in the scriptures (besides the above mentioned Jeremiah text). See Ps 39:3 (LXX); Prov 3:3 (MT); Prov 7:3 (LXX).

92 A comparison of Ezek 36:26 and 2 Cor 3:3 reveals that both texts mention the Spirit (πνεῦμα), both share a stone-flesh antithesis, and both connect the notion of “flesh” to the human heart (i.e., both use the expression καρδιά σαρκίνη). Ezek 11:19 is virtually identical to 36:26 and so it is likewise cited as a text that Paul alludes to. However, as we will see below, the context of Ezek 36:26 suggests that Paul points to it rather than 11:19.

93 Cf. Hays, *Echoes*, 128.

94 Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 226.

Thrall continues:

[The] later divine communication, Christ's letter, is superior to the earlier divine communication, the giving of the law, in that it is no merely external publication of God's will, but rather its inward implanting in *receptive* hearts though the operation of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁵

In short, as the interpretation of Thrall suggests, Paul, by means of this allusion to Ezekiel, meant to imply that stone tablets produce stone hearts.⁹⁶ The implication, of course, is that the hearts of the Jews were hardened by the stone tablets while the hearts of the followers of Christ were instead made “receptive” by the Spirit.

As we have understood 2 Cor 3:3 in connection to the earlier texts that Paul alludes to thus far—Exod 31:18 and Jer 38:33—Paul has indeed set the Torah beside the letter of Christ. But, with these two allusions, there is no clear indication that Paul's intent was to malign the former. Rather, the allusions to Exod 31:18 and Jer 38:33 merely suggest the superiority of Paul's internally inscribed letter (i.e., the existence of the Corinthian community) to the Torah's externally inscribed text while, at the same time, acknowledging that both the Torah and Paul's “letter” were divinely authored.

But, despite this, according to the way that many have read this verse, Paul's readers were to conclude—based solely upon the apostle's allusion to Ezekiel—that the opposition between “stone tablets” and “tablets of human hearts” was really intended to represent the opposition of *ineffective* stone tablets (for those with hearts of stone, i.e., the Jews) to the *effective*, heart-inscribed letter of Christ (for those with feeling hearts, i.e., the followers of Christ).⁹⁷ But again, without evidence of Judaizing in Corinth, such an alleged contrast makes little sense. Furthermore, it is difficult to understand how such a contrast would serve Paul's apologetic purpose. However, if Paul's reference

95 Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 228 (my emphasis).

96 See also, among others who voice a similar opinion: Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 82; Lietzmann, *An die Korinther 1–II*, 110–11; Collange, *Énigmes*, 53; Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 108–9; and Hays, *Echoes*, 128–29.

97 It is important to note that Hafemann opposes this way of interpreting the text, “. . . it is precisely this contrast between the two conditions of the heart which Paul does *not* introduce in [2 Cor] 3:3. Moreover, there is no such corresponding negative nuance associated with the fact that the law was written on stone, either in Ezekiel, where the new heart of flesh is given in order that God's law might be kept, not done away with (!), or elsewhere in the Old Testament” (*Suffering*, 208).

to Ezekiel was *not* intended as a pejorative swipe at Israel’s unfeeling, Torah-observant, hearts, how should the reference be understood?

I suggest that the allusion to Ezekiel’s transformation of stone to flesh hearts had nothing to do with the contrast between those who observed the Torah and those who followed Paul’s Torah free gospel. Rather, the allusion was meant to contrast the Corinthians’ *own* hearts, their stony hearts prior to their conversion and their hearts of flesh since that time. Besides the absence of Judaizing activity in Corinth, my interpretation is supported first, by viewing Ezek 36:26 within its larger context⁹⁸ and, second, by keeping in mind Paul’s practice of “correlating God’s word to Israel with the new circumstances of his churches and the content of his kerygma.”⁹⁹

Of course, in its original context, Ezekiel’s text referred to Israel’s experience in captivity and her anticipated restoration following the Babylonian exile. But, as we have already noted, the original context of any given scriptural passage was of no concern to Paul. Rather, the apostle was interested in finding the *hidden* sense of the scriptural text in light of his understanding of both the gospel and the circumstances faced by his communities. If we keep this in mind while looking at the Ezekiel text in its larger context, Paul’s motivation for alluding to it comes clearly into focus.

²³ And I will sanctify my great name which has been profaned among the nations (ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν), [my name] which you have profaned in their midst. And the nations (τὰ ἔθνη) will recognize that I am the Lord when I am sanctified among you before their eyes. ²⁴ And I will take you from among the nations (ἐκ τῶν ἐθνῶν) and will gather you together from all the lands and I will bring you into your land. ²⁵ And I will sprinkle upon you clean water and you will be cleansed from all your uncleanness and from all your idols, and I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart and I will give you a new spirit and I will remove the stone heart from your flesh and I will give you a human heart (καρδίαν σαρκίνην). ²⁷ And I will put my spirit upon you and I will make it so that you will live according to my decrees and you will guard my rules and do them.

For Paul, the statements, “I will take you from among the nations” (36:24), and “[I] will gather you together from all the lands” (36:24) would likely *not* have referred to Israel (any more than τὸ ῥῆμα would refer to the Torah in Paul’s

⁹⁸ We need to recognize that Paul did not allude to a specific *verse* in Ezekiel—since such did not exist in the apostle’s time—but rather he was pointing to a passage in Ezekiel.

⁹⁹ The quotation is from Hays, *Echoes*, 154, cited above.

allusion to Deut 30:11–14 in Rom 10:6–8). But, these phrases for Paul would have pointed to his gentile converts. Note in particular the phrase in 36:26: “the nations will recognize that I am the Lord.” I suggest that Paul would have understood the passage cited above as Ezekiel’s prophetic prediction of both the eschatological inclusion of the gentiles and his own success in preaching the gospel among them.¹⁰⁰

For Paul, the expression, “you will be cleansed from all your uncleanness and from your idols” (36:25), would have pointed to the gentiles’ (and, in particular, the Corinthians’) turn from polytheism. Furthermore, the phrases “I will sprinkle upon you clean water” (36:25) and “I will cleanse you” (36:25) would have called to the mind the baptism of the Corinthian gentiles. Finally, the lines, “and I will give you a new spirit” (36:26) and “I will put my spirit upon you” (36:27) could be understood as a reference to the Corinthians’ reception and continued experience of the Spirit.¹⁰¹

We can see, therefore, that Paul’s allusion to Ezekiel and specifically the prophet’s mention of replacing stone hearts with hearts of flesh—given the dearth of evidence about any Judaizing practices in the Corinthian community—was almost certainly meant *not* as a general statement pointing to the inability of the Torah to bring about salvation to the Jews. Instead, the allusion would have been intended to remind the members of the Corinthian community of their own turn from idolatry to the worship of the one, true deity. In short, by alluding to the Ezekiel text, Paul meant to remind the Corinthians of their conversion: *their own* stone hearts (*not* the hearts of Israel!) had become human, feeling hearts.¹⁰²

Interpreted in this way, Paul’s allusions to the tablets of the Torah, “written by the finger of God,” are not to be understood as either impugning the Torah or Torah observance. Rather, the allusive presence of the Torah in 2 Cor 3:3 takes on a positive rather than negative role. However, even though Paul does not impugn the Torah in this section, it is not yet clear why he wanted to compare his “letter of recommendation” (i.e., the community) to the Torah. How could such a comparison fit into his defense? What exactly was his strategy?

100 Supporting this is the surface meaning of both 2 Cor 3:2 and 3:3. These two verse are primarily focused on Paul’s missionary success among the (gentile) Corinthians.

101 Note that in 3:3 Paul refers to the Spirit as the author of the community-as-letter.

102 Note Paul’s reference to the hearts of idolaters in Rom 1:21: “and their senseless heart (καρδία) was darkened.”

The Torah and Paul’s “Letter” of Recommendation

I suggest that Paul had a particular strategy in mind for the allusive inclusion of the Torah in his argument. To some extent, his use of the Torah parallels his implicit introduction of the figure of Moses in this same section. Just as Paul—in response to questions about his fitness—implicitly compares himself to the paradigmatic envoy of God, so too, in response to his lack of commendatory letters, the apostle *explicitly* claims that the community represents his letter and he then *implicitly* compares that “letter” to the Torah. He does this, I suggest, because the Torah represents for him the exemplar of all texts that are normally-inscribed. This is not to suggest that Paul thought of the Torah as a normal text per se but rather, like most texts, it was written either with ink on papyrus (or parchment) or it was carved in stone.¹⁰³ In other words, Paul introduces the Torah here in order to set up an implied *a fortiori* argument and, more specifically, an argument *a maiore ad minus* (“from the greater to the lesser”).¹⁰⁴ Such an argument relies on the assumption that something that holds true for a greater entity also logically holds true for a lesser one.¹⁰⁵

I suggest that, when responding to the Corinthian request for letters of recommendation, Paul is not content to argue simply that he already possesses a commendatory “letter” in the form of the community. Nor is he satisfied with the suggestion of 3:2 that his “letter” is superior to a normal letter of recommendation (because it is inscribed on his heart). Instead, by comparing his “letter” to the Torah, Paul employs an even bolder strategy. By means of this comparison, he contends that his “letter” (i.e. the letter of Christ that is the community itself) is superior to *any* other document inscribed in/on a normal medium. As a Jew who “advanced in Judaism beyond many of [his] peers” (Gal 1:14), The Torah represented the very best of that which had been (or ever could be) inscribed on normal writing material, whether that be stone, parchment, or papyrus. For Paul, the Torah represented, as he says in Rom 3:2, nothing less than “the oracles of God.” Consequently, by demonstrating the superiority of his heart-written “letter” of recommendation to the stone-inscribed Torah he would, by implication, prove its superiority to any text written on normal material (i.e., stone, parchment, or papyrus).

103 Note Paul’s mention of ink (as well as stone) in 3:3.

104 We will discuss *a fortiori* arguments in greater detail in the chapter that follows.

105 For example, if a person has the ability to lift a weight of 150 pounds then it stands to reason that that same person is capable of picking up something weighing 10 pounds.

In the context of his apology, the apostle meant to imply that since his heart-written “letter” could claim superiority even to the Torah, then it would certainly rank superior to any papyrus letter of recommendation that could be produced. Consequently, Paul further implies, the Corinthians’ desire for a normal letter of recommendation is misguided. As we will see, Paul will expand upon this idea in the section that follows. There, however, he will approach it from a different angle. Whereas here in 3:3, the apostle implicitly contends that his heart-written letter is superior to any text (including the Torah) inscribed on typical writing material (e.g., stone or papyrus), in the section that follows (3:7–11), he will set his Spirit-inspired ministry over against Moses’s ministry of γράμμα.¹⁰⁶

An Envoy (Διάκονος) of a New Covenant

Paul concludes this first section of his apology in 3:6; there he describes himself as a minister of a new covenant (διάκονος καινῆς διαθήκης), made fit for his role by the deity ([ὁ θεὸς] καὶ ἱκανώσεν ἡμᾶς). As we saw earlier in this chapter, Paul’s use of the verb ἱκανόω here calls to the mind of his readers the deity’s commissioning of Moses in Exod 4:10. Paul’s self-description as an “envoy of a new covenant” likewise points to the figure of the lawgiver because of the latter’s connection to the covenant with Israel (called by Paul ἡ παλαιὰ διαθήκη), a covenant that the apostle will later mention explicitly (3:14). Paul follows this statement with two explanatory phrases: the first states οὐ γράμματος ἀλλὰ πνεύματος (“not of letter but Spirit”) and the second claims τὸ γὰρ γράμμα ἀποκτείνει, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ζωοποιεῖ (“for the letter kills but the Spirit gives life”). We will consider each of these phrases in turn.

Exactly to what the first phrase (οὐ γράμματος ἀλλὰ πνεύματος) points is unclear. It could either refer to Paul’s ministry or to the new covenant. In other words, Paul could be saying that:

- a) God has made him fit to be a διάκονος of a new covenant (καινῆς διαθήκης) and he is a διάκονος οὐ γράμματος ἀλλὰ πνεύματος, or
- b) God made him fit to be a διάκονος of a new covenant (καινῆς διαθήκης) and that καινὴ διαθήκη is οὐ γράμματος ἀλλὰ πνεύματος.

106 It is unfortunate that the English term “letter” is used to render both ἐπιστολή and γράμμα. I will appeal to the Greek terminology when possible to lessen the confusion that otherwise results.

Curiously, the first possibility, that the phrase points to Paul’s διακονία, is rarely considered by contemporary scholars.¹⁰⁷ Instead, it is typically assumed that the new covenant is a covenant, “not of letter but of Spirit.” However, the evidence from the text seems to point in the other direction. Although the idea of a new covenant is important in Paul’s argument in this section, it is not its focus. Rather, the focus of the whole section under discussion, and indeed the whole of 2:14–7:4, is Paul’s διακονία.¹⁰⁸ The fact that Paul points to Moses’s διακονία rather than to the παλαιά διαθήκη in the section that follows (3:7–11) further confirms that Paul’s focus here is on ministry (διακονία) and not covenant (διαθήκη).¹⁰⁹ How then does this phrase apply to the apostle as a διάκονος of a new covenant, a διάκονος whose διακονία is οὐ γράμματος ἀλλὰ πνεύματος?

Paul’s initial description of his διακονία in the antithetical phrase is negative: he is a διάκονος *not* of letter (οὐ γράμματος). The reference to γράμμα (“letter”) here points in two different directions. On the one hand, it points back to Paul’s discussion of epistolary commendation in 3:1–3. There Paul claims that his “letter of recommendation,” unlike a normal epistolary commendation, is not characterized by γράμμα. But, Paul’s negative way of describing his διακονία (οὐ γράμματος) points not only back to his earlier discussion of commendatory letters in 3:2–3, it also points forward to his discussion of Moses’ ministry in the verses that follow (as suggested above) for, in the opening verse of that later section (3:7), the apostle indicates that the lawgiver’s διακονία, unlike his own, was “carved in letters on stone [tablets]” (ἐν γράμμασιν ἐντετυπωμένη λίθοις).

After telling his readers what his διακονία is *not* (οὐ γράμματος), Paul then proceeds to inform them about it in positive terms, describing it as a ministry of Spirit (ἀλλὰ πνεύματος). Like his mention of the γράμμα in the same phrase, his reference to the Spirit here likewise points both backwards to the earlier argument and forward to the one that will follow. In the earlier passage,

107 The exception is Thrall who addresses the possibility that the phrase points to Paul’s ministry in a footnote. However, she quickly dismisses it (*Second Epistle*, 234, n. 306). Perhaps, because most scholars tend to conflate the terms διακονία and διαθήκη, the distinction between the two possibilities has been seen as insignificant. But, we will see in the next chapter that such a distinction is important. While contemporary interpreters may see no difference between the terms διακονία and διαθήκη, Paul certainly did!

108 Paul’s language in this section by itself indicates this. The new covenant is only mentioned in this verse (and it is mentioned in conjunction with Paul’s ministry). Paul, however, uses terms focused on his ministry throughout the section; he uses the verb διακονέω in 3:3; the noun διάκονος here in 3:6; and the noun διακονία in 3:7; 3:8; and 3:9 (twice).

109 Of course, Paul refers to the παλαιά διαθήκη in 3:14 but there that phrase is synonymous with the scriptures. It does not seem to point directly to the covenantal relationship between the deity and Israel.

particularly in 3:3, Paul refers to his “letter of recommendation” as the Spirit-filled Corinthian community (literally, the community “written . . . by the Spirit of the living God”). But, Paul also points ahead here to the following section (3:7–11), where he explicitly ties the Spirit to his ministry; in 3:8, he refers to it as ἡ διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος.

Following the antithetical description of his ministry (οὐ γράμματος ἀλλὰ πνεύματος), the apostle then adds a statement that emphasizes that description in a dramatic way. At the end of 3:6, he makes the claim that, “the letter kills (τὸ γὰρ γράμμα ἀποκτείνει), but the Spirit gives life (τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ζωοποιεῖ).” This phrase functions as a transition from his discussion focused on letters of recommendation to an argument that juxtaposes his ministry (διακονία) to that of Moses. Or to put it another way, the phrase facilitates the shift from an argument where Paul *allusively* juxtaposes his ministry with that of Moses to one where he explicitly sets the ministries side-by-side.

Stylistically, the final phrase of 3:6 (“the letter kills but the Spirit gives life”) is both striking and emphatic. Because it has a proverb-like quality to it, it presents to its readers something that sounds like a universal truth applied by the apostle to the present situation.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, the phrase is almost perfectly balanced. Both sides of the antithesis open with their respective subjects. Each side opens with the article τό which is then followed by a conjunction (γάρ/δέ) and a noun (γράμμα/πνεῦμα). A present tense verb (ἀποκτείνει/ζωοποιεῖ) concludes each statement. Both phrases, in addition, contain the same number of syllables (eight).¹¹¹ But, despite their parallel structure, each side of the phrase contains an opposing idea.¹¹² The contrast between the parallel structure and the antithetical content is striking.

Nevertheless, in terms of subject matter, the antithetical sentence concluding 3:6 (τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ζωοποιεῖ) brings something new to Paul’s argument. For the first time in 2:14–7:4, the apostle explicitly describes something that is written on conventional material—metonymously referred to here as τὸ γράμμα—as something both negative and harmful. While he had earlier alluded to the Torah as an exemplar with which to compare his own “text” (3:3), he nevertheless attributed nothing negative to it or to any other conventionally written document. He simply suggested that a heart-written, Spirit-authored letter was

110 Oliveira, *Diakonie*, 178–79.

111 Together, the phrases also exhibit both anaphora (i.e., each begins with the article τό) and homoioteleuton (i.e., the final syllable, ει on each of the verbs). See Kuschnerus, *Gemeinde*, 178–80.

112 Oliveira, *Diakonie*, 67.

superior. But at the very end of 3:6, he insists, to the contrary, that “the letter kills.” We will have to wait until the next section of the letter (3:7–11) to determine what he means by this phrase.

Summary and Conclusion

In the current chapter, we have traced the various twists and turns in the first ten verses of Paul’s argument (2:14–3:6). In these verses, three themes dominate. The first is Paul’s metaphorical depiction of his ministry as a ritual procession; the second is the topic of letters of recommendation; and the third is the question of his fitness.

The comparison of Paul’s ministry to a ritual procession appears in several different contexts in these verses. The apostle initially describes himself as led in triumph by the deity (2:14). He then almost immediately depicts himself as a scent (2:15), alluding to the fragrances used to herald the approach of the deity’s epiphany in a ritual procession. Finally, he implies that his heart-written letter—that is, the transformed community itself—is like something carried in a sacred procession for all to see.

The subject of commendatory letters represents the next important theme of the section. As mentioned earlier, suspicions about Paul’s integrity (prompted in part by the letter now found in 2 Corinthians 8) likely motivated the community to request letters of support from the apostle to reassure them of his honesty regarding the collection. Either Paul’s commissioning letter (for Titus) in 2 Corinthians 8 or the letters that passed between Cicero and Brutus (examined above) provide examples of the type of commendatory letters that the community may have desired. Paul, however, refused the Corinthian request. He claimed, to the contrary, that he had no need of such letters because he already possessed one. That letter took the form of the transformed Corinthian community, a “letter” written on his heart. Paul compares this “letter” to the Torah and he even insists on the superiority of his “text” over the latter. With this comparison, Paul brings Moses into the conversation. His “text,” the product of his διακονία is, he suggests, superior even to the text that resulted from the lawgiver’s ministry.

The third theme presented in this section has as its focus Paul’s fitness to be God’s envoy. With this theme, Paul also brings Moses into his argument. The lawgiver—by his own admission (Exod 4:10)—was unfit (οὐχ ἱκανός) for his role as God’s envoy but, as the Exodus text informs us, was made so by the deity (cf. Exod 4:12). In the same way, Paul contends, his fitness has resulted not

from his own efforts but rather from the deity; God has made him fit (ἰκάνωσεν) for his role as διάκονος of a new covenant. But, he insists, his διακονία is one of Spirit, not letter (2 Cor 3:6).

These three themes all have one thing in common: the correct interpretation of Paul's procession, his letter, and his fitness depends on whether or not the viewer is saved, an idea raised early in the letter, in 2:15–16:

... for we are the aroma of Christ (Χριστοῦ εὐωδία) to God among those who are being saved (ἐν τοῖς σωζομένοις) and among those who are perishing (ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις); to the one a scent from death to death, to the other a scent from life to life.

The metaphorical procession in which Paul participates can be viewed either as a military triumph—in which Paul is led to his death, a victim of God's vengeance—or as an “triumphal” epiphany procession—in which the apostle displays in his body the salvific act of the deity (in the cross of Christ). If it is interpreted in the former way, it is interpreted so because the viewer is perishing. If seen in the latter manner, it is because the viewer is saved. In the same way, Paul can be seen as fit for his role, made so by the deity, or he can be viewed as unfit. One's eschatological status determines his or her perception of the apostle.

What applies to the Corinthians' perception of the apostle also applies to their perception of themselves. Paul's implicit point is that the Corinthians can either recognize their own transformation resulting from Paul's ministry or not. If they recognize such a transformation, then they are indeed the apostle's letter of recommendation; they acknowledge the deity's power at work in the apostle's ministry. If they cannot recognize themselves as Paul's letter (i.e., they cannot recognize God at work in them as a result of Paul's ministry) then obviously, Paul implies, that can only be because they have not been transformed (i.e., saved).

The Ministries of Condemnation and Righteousness (2 Cor 3:7–11)

Introduction

While, as we have seen, Paul *implicitly* refers to Moses in 2 Cor 2:16; 3:3; and 3:5–6, it is only in 3:7–11 that we see an *explicit* reference to the lawgiver. In this section of the letter, Paul alludes for the first time to Exod 34:29–35, a passage that narrates Moses' second descent from Mount Sinai with the Torah. Paul employs an *a fortiori* argument here as he had in the previous section (particularly in 3:2–3). However, while the earlier argument was *a maiore ad minus* ("from the greater to the lesser"), this one is *a minore ad maius* ("from the lesser to the greater"). By means of this argument, Paul compares his own ministry to the corresponding ministry of Moses. But, as we will see, while he compares his ministry with that of Moses in one regard, he also contrasts the effects of those ministries. Both the structure and the logic of Paul's argument in this section are significant and, in the pages that follow, we will consider each.¹

The Ministries of Paul and Moses: Comparison or Contrast in 2 Cor 3:7–11?

Because Paul sets up a hard and fast *contrast* between the death-dealing letter and the life-giving Spirit in the statement immediately preceding this section (3:6b), his subsequent argument concerning the ministries of both Moses and himself comes as a bit of a surprise. For, in this section, Paul introduces an argument that presumably establishes a *comparison* (*a minore ad maius*) rather than a contrast. As such, Paul seemingly *compares* Moses' ministry of letter—which is characterized as a ministry of death in the argument's first sentence—to his own ministry of Spirit. Clearly, this observation raises a significant interpretive problem. How can Paul *contrast* the letter and the Spirit in 3:6 (and, as we will see, follow that contrast with corresponding contrasts

¹ An earlier form of this chapter appeared as "Glory in the Ministry of Death: Gentile Condemnation and Letters of Recommendation in 2 Cor. 3:6–11," *NovT* 46 (2004) 313–337. Used with permission.

throughout 3:7–11) and, at the same time, *compare* Moses’ ministry of the letter with his own ministry of the Spirit in 3:7–11?

Perhaps an incongruity exists between the structure of Paul’s argument in 3:7–11 (an argument that should exhibit a comparison) and its meaning (an argument focused on contrast). Indeed, there are good reasons to understand 3:7–11 in terms of contrast rather than comparison. The most notable justification focuses on the internal contrasts within each of the sentences that make up 3:7–11. Probably the clearest example appears in the second sentence (3:9): “for if there is glory in the *ministry of condemnation*, much more does the *ministry of justification* exist in glory!” It is hard to imagine how one could interpret the ministries of “condemnation” and “justification” in this verse in any sense other than as standing in direct opposition to one another. This verse alone seems to force the interpreter to read the whole section in terms of contrast rather than comparison. The juxtaposed pairs in the remaining sentences seem indeed to reinforce that contrast. In addition, the third sentence in the series—taking the form of an oxymoron (“for what had been glorified had not been glorified . . .”)—makes the contrast between Paul’s and Moses ministry even more difficult to deny.²

Another reason that 3:7–11 is sometimes interpreted as an argument not of comparison but of contrast arises from the argument’s context. On the one hand, as we have already seen, immediately prior to this section there appears the antithetical sentence of 3:6b, “the letter kills but the Spirit gives life.” If we were to understand 3:7–11 as an argument of comparison, then there would seem to be a logical disconnect in the transition from 3:6 to 3:7–11. On the other hand, shortly after Paul begins the next section (3:12–18), he directly contrasts his behavior with that of the lawgiver, claiming that he is, “not like Moses” (3:13). Set between the contrasts of the letter and Spirit on the one hand (3:6) and the actions of the lawgiver and apostle on the other (3:12–13), one is tempted to read the juxtaposition of the ministry of Moses and Paul in the same way (3:7–11).³ Along these lines, Sze-kar Wan sets up Paul’s argument in 3:7–11 in terms of a series of binary opposites.

3:6	Letter kills	Spirit gives life
3:7–8	Ministry of death	Ministry of Spirit
3:9	Ministry of condemnation	Ministry of Righteousness
3:11	That which is abolished	That which abides
[implied]	Mosaic covenant	New Covenant

2 Cf., David Hellholm, “Moses as διάκονος of the παλαιὰ διαθήκη—Paul as the διάκονος of the καινή διαθήκη: *Argumenta Amplificationis* in 2 Cor 2,14–4,6,” *ZNW* 99 (2008): 279.
3 The difficulty is compounded by the tendency to read anything having to do with the Law in

The terms in each column, Wan suggests, are exclusive of those in the other. He contends that each column in total represents a covenant, the first, the Mosaic (or old) covenant and the second, the new covenant. He ultimately concludes that “the Mosaic covenant . . . is in fact [the] opposite [of the new covenant].”⁴

Unfortunately, notwithstanding the above arguments, if we understand this section as an argument of contrast, we are faced with the equally difficult question: why would Paul use a comparative (and seemingly inappropriate) rhetorical format (i.e., an argument *a minore ad maius*) to highlight the *contrast* between the ministries of Paul and Moses? In order to explore this issue further, we will briefly look at the logic of an argument *a minore ad maius* and ask if, and under what circumstances, this kind of argument allows room for contrast.

The Logic of an Argument *a minore ad maius*

As mentioned above, the *a minore ad maius* argument represents one of two types of arguments *a fortiori* (“from the stronger”). These are the arguments: *a minore ad maius* (“from the lesser to the greater”) and *a maiore ad minus* (“from the greater to the lesser”).⁵ Aristotle, in his *Rhetorica*, describes both types although he does not name them as such. He begins with the argument *a maiore ad minus*:

Another topic [of the demonstrative enthymemes] is derived from the more or less. For instance, if not even the gods know everything, hardly can men; for this amounts to saying that if a predicate, which is more probably affirmable of one thing, does not belong to it, it is clear that it does not belong to another of which it is less affirmable. And to say that

Paul's letters (such as Moses' ministry) in terms of a Law-Gospel contrast (based at least in part upon our knowledge of Paul's letter to the Galatians and Paul's letter to the Romans).

4 Sze-kar Wan, *Power in Weakness: Conflict and Rhetoric in Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians*, in *New Testament in Context* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 69–70. See also, in particular, Oliveira, *Diakonie*, 177–88.

5 Similar to the *a minore ad maius* is the rabbinic קל וחומר (“light and heavy”) argument to which 3:7–11 is often compared (e.g., Stockhausen, *Moses' Veil*, 109–10). It represents one of the so-called seven rules of Hillel. On the rules of Hillel, see H.L. Strack and Gunther Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. Markus Bockmuehl (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 19–23. Concerning the relationship of Rabbinic argumentation to Greco-Roman rhetoric, see David Daube, “Rabbinic Methods of Interpretation and Hellenistic Rhetoric,” *HUCA* 22 (1949): 239–64.

a man who beats his father also beats his neighbors, is an instance of the rule that, if the less exists, the more also exists. Either of these arguments may be used, according as it is necessary to prove either that a predicates is affirmable or that it is not (2.23.4).

As Aristotle points out, both of the above arguments rely on the logic: if X is true, then Y is also true. The reasoning of the first argument (the *a maiore ad minus*) is as follows: if X is true then Y is also true but to a *lesser* extent. The gods here represent the *maius* and humans, the *minus*. The point of comparison or commonality is the lack of omniscience among both groups. Conversely, the logic of Aristotle's second example (*a minore ad maius*) indicates that if X is true then Y is also true but to a *greater* extent. In this example the *minus* is the likelihood of a particular man to beat his father (i.e., it is less likely) while the *maius* is the likelihood of the man to beat his neighbor (i.e., it is more likely). In short, if a man is likely to use violence against his father, he is clearly more likely to assault his neighbor. What is common to both is the likelihood of the man to commit violence.

Cicero, in his *Topica*, likewise affirms the importance of the commonality between the *minus* and the *maius*:

All arguments from comparison are valid if they are of the following character: What is valid for the greater should be valid in the less (*quod in re maiore valet valeat in minore*). . . . Likewise the reverse: what is valid in the less should be valid in the greater (*Item contra; item quod in re parī valet in hac quae par est*).⁶

Without commonality appearing in the *minus* and *maius*, Cicero implicitly argues, these types of arguments fail.

However, despite the importance of such commonality in the *minus* and *maius*, some room for contrast nevertheless exists. In order to consider how contrast can be used in these arguments, we will begin our investigation by constructing a very simple example of an argument *a minore ad maius*. Furthermore, we will use a form similar to what we see in 2 Cor 3:7–8. We will then ask where a contrast can appear in the argument and where it cannot.

Our example, in its simplest form, asks: if a man treats his pet kindly how much more kindly will he treat his children? Here, the man's kindly treatment of his dependents (both animal and human) represents that which the *minus* and the *maius* have in common. One could hardly persuade anyone of a man's kindness toward his children by arguing that he treats his pet cruelly. To the

⁶ *Topica* 4.23.

contrary, if the *minus* were to highlight a man's cruelty in such an argument, one would likewise expect cruelty rather than kindness to be emphasized by what follows in the *maius*.

But that is not to say that there can be no contrast at all in such an argument. Indeed, an effectively placed contrast has the potential to increase the strength of an *a minore ad maius* argument, as long as the commonality between the *minus* and the *maius* is maintained. We can, for instance, adjust our example somewhat as follows: if a man treats *those who hate him* with kindness (*minus*), with how much more kindness will he treat *those who love him* (*maius*)? Here, we have added a contrast to the argument—those who hate the man versus those who love him—but, at the same time, we have faithfully maintained the necessary commonality between the argument's *minus* and the *maius*, that is, the man's kindly treatment of others. And, as we can see, the addition of the contrast makes the comparison between the *minus* and the *maius* all the more pronounced by dramatically emphasizing the extent of the man's kindness towards those who love him.

We will now add some modifiers to make the contrast within the sentence even more pronounced: If a man treats *his scheming and corrupt enemies who passionately hate him* (*minus*) with kindness, with how much more kindness will treat *his honest and upright family members who love him* (*maius*)? Here we can see that, despite the emphatic opposition that we have added, the focus of the sentence remains on the man's kindness. We can therefore conclude that although contrasts are possible within an *a minore ad maius* argument, they do not usurp the function of comparison. Indeed, they may serve to actually strengthen the underlying assumption contained in the *minus* and *maius*.

Comparison and Contrast within 3:7–11?

If we apply what we have seen above to the sentences that appear in 2 Cor 3:7–11, we can gain a better understanding of Paul's argumentative logic in the section. Since the argument obviously contains both comparative and contrasting elements, the interpretations that emphasize those contrasts are not necessarily inaccurate as long as they recognize that *the focal point* of the argument lies with the comparison of the *minus* to the *maius*.⁷ In order to understand the

7 Of those who have recognized the importance of the comparison, see for example Bultmann, *The Second Letter*, 79–84; Otfried Hofius, "Gesetz und Evangelium Nach 2. Korinther 3," in *Paulusstudien* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1989), 89; and Wünsch, *Paulinische Brief*, 246, esp. n. 80.

precise points of comparison and contrast, we will briefly turn to the style and the structure of the section.

As many have recognized, Paul's argument in 3:7–11 is carefully structured and stylistically sophisticated. The section is composed of four sentences characterized by anaphora (similarities at the beginning of a phrase),⁸ word repetition,⁹ and polyptoton (words repeated in different forms).¹⁰ Three of the four sentences are conditional (3:7–8; 3:9; and 3:11) and the first of the three (3:7–8) is interrogative in form.¹¹ While the protasis and apodosis of both second and third sentences are well-balanced, those of the first sentence are not. Rather, its protasis has been significantly expanded. We will discuss this expansion below. In the meantime, however, for the purpose of comparing the three conditional sentences to one another, we will temporarily remove the expansion from the protasis of the first sentence. As such, the sentence reads:

⁷ Now if the ministry of death (ἡ διακονία τοῦ θανάτου), chiseled in letters on stone tablets, came into being in glory (ἐγενήθη ἐν δόξῃ) . . . ⁸ how much more (πῶς οὐχὶ μᾶλλον) glorious (ἐν δόξῃ) will the ministry of the spirit (ἡ διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος) be?

Although the second and third conditional sentences (3:9 and 3:11) appear in declarative rather than interrogative form, nevertheless they bear a strong resemblance to the opening sentence:

⁹ For if there is glory (δόξα) in the ministry of condemnation (ἡ διακονία τῆς κατακρίσεως), much more (πολλῷ μᾶλλον) does the ministry of justification (ἡ διακονία τῆς δικαιοσύνης) exist in glory (δόξῃ)! . . .

¹¹ For if what was rendered powerless was glorious (διὰ δόξης), much more (πολλῷ μᾶλλον) is the permanent glorious (ἐν δόξῃ)!¹²

8 3:7, 9, 11.

9 Διακονία appears in 3:7, 8, 9a, 9b; δόξα in 3:7a, 7b, 8, 9a, 9b, 10, 11a, 11b; μᾶλλον in 3:8, 9b, 11b (πολλῷ μᾶλλον in 3:9, 11). In addition, γάρ appears in 3:9, 10, 11a; ἐν in 3:7, 8, 10, 11b; and διὰ in 3:7, 11.

10 Δόξα in 3:7a, 7b, 8, 9a, 9b, 10, 11a, 11b; δοξάζω in both finite (δεδοξασται, 3:10) and participial forms (δεδοξασμένον, 3:10). See Kuschnerus, *Gemeinde*, 180.

11 The protasis of the first conditional sentence appears in 3:7 followed by the apodosis in 3:8. The protasis of the second appears in 3:9a and the apodosis in 3:9b. The protasis of the third appears in 3:11a and the apodosis in 3:11b.

12 For the meaning of καταργέω as "to make powerless," see BAGD s.v. 1. We will discuss this further below.

As can be seen, each of the sentences contains a marker of comparison, πῶς οὐχὶ μᾶλλον in 3:8 and πολλῶ μᾶλλον in 3:9 and 11. In addition, the protasis of each of the three opens with the same particle (εἰ), followed by a description of Moses' ministry, followed in turn by some form of the term δόξα:

3:7	εἰ	ἡ διακονία	τοῦ θανάτου	ἐγενήθη	ἐν δόξῃ
3:9a	εἰ	τῇ διακονίᾳ	τῆς κατακρίσεως		δόξα
3:11a	εἰ	τὸ καταργούμενον			διὰ δόξης

Like the protases, the apodoses of the three sentences also strongly resemble one another. Each begins with a comparative phrase, followed by a description of the ministry of Paul, and each concludes with the term δόξα:

3:8	πῶς... μᾶλλον	ἡ διακονία	τοῦ πνεύματος	ἔσται	ἐν δόξῃ
3:9b	πολλῶ μᾶλλον	ἡ διακονία	τῆς δικαιοσύνης	περισεύει	δόξῃ
3:11b	πολλῶ μᾶλλον	τὸ μένον			ἐν δόξῃ ¹²

The structural similarity of these three sentences demonstrates the *comparative* logic of Paul's argument in 3:7–11. For the sake of simplicity, it can be reduced to the following:

<i>If</i>	a) the ministry of death (3:7), b) the ministry of condemnation (3:9a), and c) that which is rendered powerless (3:11a) is endowed with glory,
<i>then</i>	a) the ministry of Spirit (3:8), b) the ministry of righteousness (3:9b), and c) that which is permanent (3:11b) will be that much more glorious.

Obviously, the *minus* of each conditional sentence (3:7–8; 3:9; 3:11) points to the ministry of Moses while the *maiús* focuses on Paul's ministry. That which the two ministries have in common is δόξα ("glory"). Therefore, according to what we have learned about the way in which an *a minore ad maiús* argument functions, we are obliged to conclude that δόξα ("glory") represents the *focal point* of Paul's argument in 3:7–11.

¹² Adapted from Hafemann, *Paul*, 275.

In sum, the comparative logic of 3:7–11 makes the claim that the Mosaic ministry was (and still is) glorious; Paul's ministry, however, is even more glorious.¹⁴ In light of this finding, we need to take seriously Paul's insistence that δόξα was attached not just to his own ministry but also to the ministry of Moses.¹⁵ Moses personally encountered the glory of God on Sinai and, according to Exod 34:29–35 (the text that Paul alludes to in 2 Cor 3:7–11), that “glory” remained on the lawgiver's face when he came down from the mountain to meet Israel.

The Expansions of Paul's Comparative Argument: 2 Cor 3:7b and 3:10

Thus far, we have only examined the first of the conditional sentences in its simplest form. We have not taken into account its lengthy expansion, an expansion that begins in 3:7b with the term ὥστε. Nor have we considered 3:10, the one sentence in the section that does not exhibit a conditional form and does not contain a comparative marker (e.g., πῶς οὐχὶ μᾶλλον or πολλῷ μᾶλλον). How do these expansions to Paul's argument function? Since the sentence appearing in 3:10 takes the form of an oxymoron—at least on the surface—and so seems to undermine our above-stated conclusion that 3:7–11 represents a true comparative argument, we will turn to it first.

The Greek text of 3:10 states: καὶ γὰρ οὐ δεδοξασται τὸ δεδοξασμένον ἐν τούτῳ τῷ μέρει εἵνεκεν τῆς ὑπερβαλλούσης δόξης and it is translated by the NRSV as follows: “Indeed, what once had glory has lost its glory because of the greater glory.” This sentence, so translated, seems to present a clear contrast between the two ministries. Obviously, the subject τὸ δεδοξασμένον refers to the glorified ministry of Moses. Although Paul's ministry is not explicitly mentioned,

14 Although the first sentence uses verbs in the aorist and future tense in its protasis and apodosis (respectively), tense plays no role in the second and third conditional sentences. Consequently, an eschatological reading (with the future pointing to the parousia) is most likely not intended. Rather, the future ἔσται (in the first sentence) should probably be understood as a logical future (e.g., Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 245; Andreas Lindemann, “Die biblische Hermeneutik des Paulus: Beobachtungen zu 2 Kor 3,” in his *Paulus, Apostel und Lehrer der Kirche: Studien zu Paulus und zum frühen Paulusverständnis* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 46). The logical future in 3:8 and the lack of tenses in 3:9 and 11 leads the reader to assume that the glory attached to the ministry of death and condemnation is not necessarily only something from the past.

15 The importance of δόξα in Paul's argument here is further supported by the fact that the term δόξα and its cognate δοξάζω appear 10 times within this short section. It should be noted that neither δόξα nor its cognate appears elsewhere in chapter 3 except in its last verse where δόξα is used three times. We will discuss this below. The term also appears in 4:4 and 4:6.

the larger context of the passage suggests that εἵνεκεν τῆς ὑπερβαλλούσης δόξης must point to it.

The seeming oxymoron appears because, according to 3:10, the Mosaic ministry is described as both “glorified” (τὸ δεδοξασμένον) and also “not glorified” (οὐ δεδόξασται). How can this be? According to the NRSV translation, the Mosaic διακονία had glory at one time (“what once had glory”), but it no longer possesses it (“[it] has lost its glory”). If we read this verse as the focal point of 3:7–11—as have some—then, despite what we have concluded about the comparative nature of an argument *a minore ad maius*, the Mosaic and the Pauline διακονίαι seem to stand in an antithetical rather than a comparative relationship.¹⁶ As we will see, however, there are two significant problems with the NRSV translation. Once we correct them, our understanding of the sentence changes.

The first of the problems with the NRSV translation has to do with the phrase, “what once had glory has lost its glory.” This English phrase does not accurately reflect the Greek text since the latter specifies nothing about a loss of glory *over time*.¹⁷ Instead, καὶ γὰρ οὐ δεδόξασται τὸ δεδοξασμένον, literally translated, stands as an oxymoron, “for even what has been glorified has not been glorified.” It seems that the NRSV translators introduced the temporal dimension into the phrase in order to help make sense of the oxymoronic statement by interpreting it to say that what had possessed glory at some point *in the past*, possesses it no longer (i.e., *in the present*).¹⁸

The second problem with the NRSV translation centers on the important phrase, ἐν τούτῳ τῷ μέρει. Curiously, the NRSV simply ignores it. How should this phrase be translated? A very similar phrase, ἐν τῷ μέρει τούτου appears in 2 Cor 9:3 where it means something like, “in this respect.”¹⁹ If we translate

16 While some have trumpeted the importance of this sentence to the subsection, I suggest to the contrary, that, of the four sentences found in 3:7–11, 3:10 has the least significance. On the importance of 3:10, see, for instance, Lambrecht, “Structure,” 274. It should be pointed out that Lambrecht’s sense of the importance of 3:10 arises because he claims that a concentric structure underlies 3:7–11 (as well as all of 2:14–4:6). Verse 10 represents the center of the concentric structure underlying the section. However, Lambrecht’s argument for the concentric structure in 3:7–11 is forced.

17 The only terms bearing tenses in this sentence are the participle δεδοξασμενον and the verb δεδόξασται. Since both are in the perfect tense, a translation suggesting the loss of glory over time is not justified.

18 Barrett also reads this verse temporally: “for that which has been glorified in the past has not been glorified at all in comparison with the surpassing glory” (*Second Epistle*, 117).

19 Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 250.

ἐν τούτῳ τῷ μέρει similarly in 3:10, it significantly softens the opposition of the oxymoronic phrase by adding a qualification.²⁰

For even what had been glorified (τὸ δεδοξασμένον) [i.e., Moses' ministry] had not been glorified (οὐ δεδόξασται) in this respect (ἐν τούτῳ τῷ μέρει) because of the surpassing glory (εἵνεκεν τῆς ὑπερβαλλούσης δόξης) [of Paul's ministry].

Understood in this way, the verse makes the claim that the ministry of Moses had indeed been glorified. But, at the same time, given its context, it also suggests that it had *not* been glorified *in the sense* that it had been so overwhelmed by the δόξα of Paul's ministry that its own δόξα *seemed* non-existent. To understand the sentence in this way is, however, quite different than claiming that the ministry of Moses possessed *no glory at all*. We can therefore see that, despite its lack of terms of comparison like those that appear in 3:7–8; 3:9; and 3:11 (e.g., πῶς οὐχὶ μᾶλλον, πολλῶ μᾶλλον), 3:10 still functions as a sentence of *comparison* rather than of real *contrast*. The phrase ἐν τούτῳ τῷ μέρει makes all the difference. The seeming oxymoron of 3:10 does not actually subvert Paul's comparative argument. Rather, it intensifies it. Comparatively speaking, even though both ministries exhibit the deity's glory, Paul's διακονία does to such an extent that it *seems* as if Moses' διακονία has not been glorified at all.

The second expansion or “interruption” of the *a minore ad maius* argument appears in the protasis of the first conditional sentence (3:7b). There, following the claim (in interrogative form) that Moses' ministry was characterized by δόξα (“now if the ministry of death, chiseled in letters on stone tablets, was glorious . . .”), the apostle adds, “. . . so that (ὥστε) the people of Israel could not gaze at Moses' face because of the glory of his face, [a glory that is] καταργουμένην.” Although 2 Cor 3:7 (i.e., the protasis of the conditional sentence of 3:7–8) clearly alludes to Exod 34:29–35, nevertheless, Paul's expansion in 3:7b adds an important idea that is not found in the original text. That is the notion that the Israelites were not *able* to look at Moses' face because of its glory.²¹ This addition, like the addition of 3:10, clearly intensifies Paul's

20 The phrase can be understood to relate generally to the entire phrase καὶ γὰρ οὐ δεδόξασται τὸ δεδοξασμένον. See Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 205. However, it makes more sense to see it as qualifying οὐ δεδόξασται. Cf. Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 91–92; Hans Windisch, *Zweite Korintherbrief*, 117; Collange, *Énigmes*, 81; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 251.

21 While the Exodus text notes that Aaron and the Israelites were seized with fear because Moses' face had been glorified (δεδοξασμένη), no mention is made of Israel's inability to

argument. By emphasizing the power of the δόξη in the *minus* (i.e., the protasis of the sentence), Paul thereby accentuates the δόξη in the *mai*us (i.e., the apodosis), the δόξη of his ministry.

At this point, it is important to ask why the apostle was so interested in the notion of “glory” and particularly the “glory” attached to Moses’ ministry. As we have already seen, many scholars have felt compelled to postulate a polemical context for 3:7–8 in order to explain Paul’s interest in δόξα—particularly connected to the διακονία of Moses—by suggesting that Paul’s opponents from outside the community were responsible for its introduction.²² But, since such suggestions about outside opponents have no substantive textual evidence to support them, we need to look for another answer to this question.

The “Glory” of Moses in Other Jewish Texts

Although Paul’s interest in Exod 34:29–35 may seem odd to us, his fascination with this text was by no means unique. Exod 34:29–35 attracted a significant amount of attention within ancient Judaism. The attention paid to it almost certainly resulted from its association with Moses’ reception of the Torah at Mount Sinai, an episode whose importance could hardly be overstated within Judaism.²³ Indeed, a number of post-biblical Jewish texts refer to the “glory” on Moses’ face. Some focus on the origin of the glory while others comment on its brilliance.

The reason that Moses’ face was glorified when he came down from Sinai was of particular interest to various later interpreters. Of course, the origin of Moses’ “shining” face is already explained by the scriptural text itself, which states that, “the skin of [Moses’] face shone because he had been talking with God” (Exod 34:29b). Some later texts, however, attempt to clarify this statement in the biblical narrative further. The *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, for example, claims that the “form of [Moses’] face” came specifically, “from the

look upon the face of the lawgiver. Paul is not the only Jewish author to make the claim that Israel was unable to look at Moses’ face as we will see below.

22 For example, as we have seen Georgi sees almost all of the text of 3:7 as coming from the opponents (except εἰ δὲ and τοῦ θανάτου). In Georgi’s words, “what was said about Moses’ ministry [by the opponents] was not intended for a comparison but was simply meant to state that Moses had δόξα” (*Opponents*, 267).

23 It is worth noting that the importance of Moses’ role as lawgiver appeared not only in Judaism. A number of pagan authors also know of Moses as the Jewish lawgiver. However, they seem ignorant of the Sinai tradition. See John G. Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism*, SBLMS 16 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 25–79.

brightness of the glory of [YHWH's] *Shekinah*.”²⁴ That is to say, Moses' glorified face directly reflected the glory (כבוד) of God's presence.

The Midrashic Commentary *Tanhuma* (9.37) gives a number of possible reasons for the glorification of Moses' face. One suggestion, like that given by *Pseudo-Jonathan*, proposes that the glory on Moses' face resulted from Moses' contact with the deity when he was “talking with God”:

At the time that the Holy One—Blessed be he!—taught [Moses] the Torah [on Mount Sinai], sparks emanated from the countenance of the *Shekinah*.²⁵

Another suggestion was that the glory came from the tablets themselves:

The tablets were six handbreadths long . . . and Moses held them by two of the handbreadths, and the Holy One, blessed be He, held them by two, and Moses obtained the beams of glory from the two handbreadths in the middle.

A third possible explanation from the commentary provides a particularly interesting explanation for Moses' glory:

After Moses wrote the Torah, a little ink was left in the pen, and when he passed it before his head, the beams of glory were formed upon him, as it is said: “And Moses knew not that the skin of his face sent forth beams.” All the glory he obtained was a reward . . . The righteous receive their reward in the world-to-come, but he received his reward at that time . . .

This final suggestion takes as its starting point Exod 34:27, a verse that describes Moses as the deity's amanuensis: “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Write these words; in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.’”

Besides pinning down the exact reason for Moses' glorified face, post-biblical writers also showed great interest in the extent of the brilliance of the glory on Moses' face. We have already observed that Paul, in 2 Cor 3:7b, draws

24 Trans. J.W. Etheridge, *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch with the Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum from the Chaldee* (New York: KTAV, 1968).

25 This and the following passage: trans. Samuel A. Berman (*Midrash Tanhuma-Yelammedenu: An English Translation of Genesis and Exodus from the Printed Version of Tanhuma-Yelammedenu with an Introduction, Notes, and Indexes* [Hoboken: KTAV, 1986]).

attention to this by claiming that the Israelites were incapable of looking at the lawgiver's face because of the intensity of its δόξα. Two other Jewish authors from the apostle's time, Philo and the author of *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (*LAB*), specifically note the brilliance of Moses' face.

Although *LAB* does not specifically mention the term "glory" in connection with Moses' face, the author nevertheless refers to the presence of light on the lawgiver's countenance. Curiously, this light is labeled an "invisible light" (*lumen invisibile*). Notwithstanding such an odd description, this "invisible light" on the face of Moses was nevertheless described as dazzling. While, unlike Paul, the author of *LAB* makes no claim that Israel was unable to look at the lawgiver's face, the author nevertheless contends that it was so bright that it "surpassed the splendor of the sun and the moon" (12:1).²⁶

Philo too, like the author of *LAB*, avoids the explicit use of the term "glory" (δόξα). He speaks instead of the luminescence (φέγγος) of Moses' countenance. However, like Paul, Philo emphasizes the degree of its brilliance by pointing out that the Israelites were unable to endure the vision of Moses:

... those who saw him were filled with awe and amazement; nor even could their eyes continue to stand the dazzling brightness that flashed from him (φέγγους ἀπαστράπτοντος) like the rays of the sun.²⁷

Like the author of *LAB*, Philo too compares the luminescence of Moses' face with the brilliance of the sun. Finally, the same ideas are emphasized by the later *Pesiqta Rabbati* which claims that,

... when Moses came down to meet Israel, they saw his radiance, surpassing and brilliant. Even as a man cannot look at the sun as it rises, so no man could look at Moses, until Moses put a veil over his face (10.6).²⁸

Like *LAB* and Philo, this text compares the face of Moses to the sun. And, like Paul and Philo, it speaks of Israel's inability to look at it.²⁹

26 Despite the brilliance of the *lumen invisibile*, however, the author of *LAB* makes no claim that the Israelites could not look at Moses. Instead, he curiously asserts that, until the lawgiver spoke, the people did not recognize him.

27 Philo, *Moses* 2.70.

28 Trans. William G. Braude, *Pesikta Rabbati: Discourses for Feasts, Fasts, and Special Sabbaths*, Yale Judaica Series (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

29 Another text that likely draws from the same tradition, the Samaritan *Memar Marqa*, likewise tells of Israel's inability to look upon Moses' face because of its glory, specifically

All of these texts make it clear that an ancient interpretive tradition within Judaism focused on the glorification of Moses' face when he descended Mount Sinai. While some texts within this tradition focus on the reason for Moses' glorified face, others emphasize its brilliance. Several of the latter texts compare it to the sun and a few of them mention the inability of humans to look at the Lawgiver because of the intensity of his radiance. Paul himself likely drew from this same interpretive stream for, like a few of the texts cited, the apostle emphasizes the extent of the "glory" on Moses' face by adding the non-scriptural detail that Israel was unable to look at the Lawgiver's countenance.³⁰

But did Paul, like the authors of these other texts, mean in some way to affirm the traditional Jewish understanding of the Sinai event? After all, the presence of δόξα on Moses' face would seem to suggest legitimization of the lawgiver's ministry (including his delivery of the Torah to Israel).³¹ Or, did Paul instead intend to subvert the way that the reception of the Torah was usually understood? Tied up with the latter question are the contrasts within Paul's comparative argument, contrasts that seem to place, at least at first glance, the ministry of Moses (and thereby his delivery of the Torah) in a particularly negative light.

Contrasts within the Comparative Sentences of 2 Cor 3:7–11

The elements of contrast found in 3:7–11 appear within each of the conditional, comparative sentences of 3:7–8; 3:9; and 3:11. In the first of these (3:7–8), the apostle adds a contrast focused on his and Moses' ministries. In 3:7, the protasis of the initial conditional sentence, he labels the latter, "the ministry of death" (ἡ διακονία τοῦ θανάτου) chiseled in letters on stone [tablets].³² Conversely, in the sentence's apodosis (3:8), he labels his own ministry, "the ministry of Spirit" (ἡ διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος).

At first glance, the juxtaposition of "the ministry of the Spirit" and "the ministry of death" seems to present no contrast at all. One would expect Paul to describe his own ministry as a "ministry of life" in order to contrast it with the

because, Moses "wore the shining light" (6.11). Elsewhere that text claims that the deity's form "dwelt on him" because Moses had approached "the holy deep darkness, where the divine one was" (6.3). This glory granted Moses a unique status. The light on his face "shone up until the day of his death" (5.4) and it, "will not abide ever again on another's face" (5.4).

30 See Hofius, "Gesetz" and Linda L. Belleville, "Tradition or Creation? Paul's Use of the Exodus Tradition in 2 Corinthians 3:7–18," in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 165–86.

31 Cf. Carey C. Newman, *Paul's Glory Christology; Tradition and Rhetoric*, NovTSup 69 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 233.

Mosaic “ministry of death.” However, in light of his earlier statement in 3:6b, a statement that connects life-giving power to the Spirit—“the letter kills but *the Spirit gives life*”—the opposition between the “ministry of death” and the “ministry of Spirit” is explained.

When we turn to the second and third conditional sentences, we encounter two other contrasts, contrasts that are more obvious than the one found in 3:7–8. In the conditional sentence of 3:9, Paul characterizes Moses’ ministry as the ministry of condemnation (ἡ διακονία τῆς κατακρίσεως) and his own as the ministry of righteousness (ἡ διακονία τῆς δικαιοσύνης). The opposition in this sentence is immediately apparent.

The final set of contrasts appears in the conditional sentence of 3:11 although here the apostle does not use the term διακονία to describe either his ministry or that of the Lawgiver. Instead, he employs participles describing the opposition between τὸ καταργούμενον with τὸ μένον. But although the term διακονία is absent here, there can be little doubt that Paul intends to juxtapose Moses’ ministry with that of his own in 3:11.

Despite the contrasts that the apostle draws in these conditional sentences, it is important to recognize that the focus of each remains on the δόξα within the διακονίαι of both Paul and Moses. The contrasts function to both affirm the presence of δόξα in both ministries as well as emphasize the glory of Paul’s διακονία over that of the ministry of Moses. But, at the same time, the contrasts that Paul employs raise a particularly difficult question: how could the apostle equate God’s δόξα with the attributes that he assigns to Moses’ διακονία, most particularly, death (3:7) and condemnation (3:9)? It is to this problem that we will now turn.

Δόξα in the Ministry of Death?

The question of how Paul could tie God’s δόξα to the ministry of death and condemnation in 3:7–11 has vexed interpreters. In general, there have been two types of responses to this question. The first focuses on Paul’s psychology while the second concentrates on his theology. Concerning the psychology of the apostle, for example, E.P. Sanders explains Paul’s connection of the δόξα of God to the ministry of death and condemnation by suggesting that this juxtaposition represents competing convictions within Paul’s psyche. On the one hand, the idea that Moses’ ministry was accompanied by the δόξα of God represents a conviction from Paul’s former life in Judaism. On the other hand, the notion that Moses’ ministry was a ministry of death and condemnation represents a conviction from Paul’s later life, following his call. Paul, Sanders is forced to

conclude, makes no attempt in 2 Corinthians 3 to reconcile the competing convictions from his past and present.³²

Gerd Theissen, reacting to suggestions that the tension in the text can be attributed to Paul's opponents' reverence for the lawgiver, proposes a psychological solution similar to that of Sanders. He argues that,

Paul is not polemicizing [in 2 Cor 3:7–11] against a veneration of Moses present among those he is addressing; he is rather correcting his own veneration of Moses. Before his conversion he understood Exodus 34 in a completely different way; then the light dawned on him. The veil fell from his heart. Moses was “exposed,” but without the tie to him ever being completely abandoned.³³

While Sanders suggests that Paul made no attempt to reconcile his competing convictions in this section of 2 Corinthians 3, Theissen argues that Paul composed the text with the purpose of presenting his earlier, mistaken view and then correcting it. Theissen further explains:

Paul treats in this text in a generalizing manner his own deception by the radiance of Moses. He himself once sought true knowledge of God from Moses. In this he knew himself to be superior to other erring men. He understood himself as a “light to those who are in darkness” (Rom 2:19) and saw in Moses the “embodiment of knowledge and truth” (Rom 2:10). But Christ took the place of Moses. In the light of the revelation of Christ, Paul radically reassessed Moses. . . . [Therefore, in this passage,] Paul is correcting his own pre-Christian picture of Moses—not that of his foes.

Unfortunately, neither of these explanations is compelling. While Sanders' suggestion has a certain logic to it, ultimately it is speculative and, as a result, not provable. If, on the other hand, Paul was correcting an earlier view in 2 Corinthians 3, as Theissen suggests, we would expect some sign of that in the text. Unfortunately, none appears. Nowhere does the apostle even hint that he is presenting his earlier opinion about Moses or offering a correction of his former, mistaken point of view.

32 E.P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 138.

33 Gerd Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology*, trans. John P. Gavin (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 132.

Another attempt to explain Paul's association of God's δόξα with death and condemnation focuses on theological conclusions drawn by Paul elsewhere, particularly in his letter to the Romans. Ralph Martin's comments can stand as representative of this opinion:

It is clear that Paul found no fault with Torah, the Law itself (Rom 7:12, 14), but he knew from his own experience that the Law set a high standard which it beckoned a person to attain, yet it provided no power to achieve the goal. The trouble lay with "man" as σάρξ ("flesh"); so human frailty and proneness to evil allowed the σάρξ to turn the Law of God (which God intended as good) into a death-dealing instrument (Rom 7:3). The reason why the Law became our enemy is given in Rom 8:3a, and Paul can glide into a set of equations when he comes to assess humankind's alienation from God: sin, flesh, Satan, Law all lead to the ultimate end of death.³⁴

Although this explanation is at least textually grounded and, consequently, potentially more persuasive than the psychological solutions outlined above, nevertheless, problems remain. Most importantly, Martin's suggestion, as it stands, cannot explain why such an argument would appear in Paul's self-defense to a community of gentiles. If we had some evidence that the Corinthians were interested in Torah observance, then we could make some sense of it. But without such evidence, one wonders why Paul would have applied such negative labels ("death" and "condemnation") to Moses' ministry in his letter.

According to what we have seen in the pages above, anyone attempting to make sense of this passage must first, truly acknowledge Paul's claim that δόξα indeed accompanied the Mosaic ministry, second, explain why Paul would label the διακονία of Moses a ministry of condemnation and death (particularly in a letter to gentiles), and third, show the relevance of such to Paul's apologetic effort.

A Possible Solution

We can begin our attempt to solve this puzzle with the assumption that when Paul speaks of the condemnation and death that accompanied the Mosaic ministry, he does not have in mind condemnation and death in store for

34 Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 61.

Torah-observant Jews. Indeed, it is hard to believe that such a claim would have been of much interest to the gentiles in the Corinthian assembly. Instead, Paul is more likely making the claim—a claim that would presumably be accepted at face value by those in his community—that the introduction of the Torah (i.e., Moses’ ministry) brought death and condemnation to the Corinthians and their predecessors because, as gentiles, they did not follow it. In other words, Paul here reminds the Corinthians of their pagan past and their previous condemnation, a condemnation that arose due to their sinfulness.³⁵ But, of course, since their conversion, that condemnation has been reversed. Such a suggestion could clarify a number of the problems surrounding 3:7–11.

First, this suggestion easily explains the negative labels that Paul attaches to Moses’ glorious ministry. Moses’ ministry brought condemnation and the sentence of death to Paul’s gentile readers. Second, the suggestion also explains why Paul would allude to Moses’ ministry in his letter to a *gentile* community. Third, if Paul indeed refers to the condemnation that Moses’ ministry brought to the *gentiles*, the apostle could, I suggest, refer to that ministry—without irony—as accompanied by the *δόξα* of God. Finally, this suggestion also makes sense of the final descriptor that Paul attaches to the glorious ministry of Moses in 3:11, where he refers to it as *τὸ καταργούμενον* (“that which has been rendered powerless”). In this case, I suggest that *τὸ καταργούμενον* would refer not to the powerlessness of the Torah to bring salvation to those who followed it but rather it would point to the powerlessness of Moses’ ministry of death and condemnation over those gentiles who now make up the Corinthian *ἐκκλησία*.³⁶

There are, however, two possible objections to this suggestion. The first has to do with Jewish belief regarding the gentiles and the Torah. Were there Jews at Paul’s time who thought that the deity would hold the gentiles accountable because they did not observe the Torah? The second possible objection has to do with Paul’s insistence on the connection between the “glory” of God and the idea of judgment and/or punishment. Are there examples of texts that make an explicit connection between judgment and/or punishment and the glory of the deity, in particular the judgment and/or punishment of gentiles? It is to these questions that we will now turn.

35 Cf. Paul’s argument in Rom 1:19–32.

36 We will return to this idea in the next chapter when we discuss the same phrase, *τὸ καταργούμενον*, in the context of 3:12.

Jewish Views about Gentiles and the Torah

The Jews of Paul's time entertained various opinions about the gentiles.³⁷ Some groups of Jews were relatively open to them, considering them religiously misguided but ultimately redeemable.³⁸ Along these lines, a number of Jewish texts from Hellenistic and Roman times, such as Zechariah 14 and Tobit, envisioned that the gentiles would eventually acknowledge YHWH and, as a result, God would ultimately offer them salvation.³⁹ In one of these texts, Tobit, the protagonist, immediately prior to his death, foretells:

... God will again have mercy on [the Jews], and God will bring them back into the land of Israel; and they will rebuild the temple of God, but not like the first one until the period when the times of fulfillment shall come. After this they all will return from their exile and will rebuild Jerusalem in splendor; and in it the temple of God will be rebuilt, just as the prophets of Israel have said concerning it. Then the nations in the whole world will all be converted and worship God in truth. They will all abandon their idols, which deceitfully have led them into their error; and in righteousness they will praise the eternal God (14:5-7).

The author of Zechariah 14 predicts a similar scenario following the final battle between YHWH and the nations besieging Jerusalem:

Then all who survive of the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year by year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the festival of booths. If any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain upon them. And if the family of Egypt do not go up and present themselves, then on them shall come the plague that the Lord inflicts on the nations that do not go up to keep the festival of booths (14:16-18).

37 For an overview of Jewish attitudes toward gentiles in Tannaitic times, see E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 206-12.

38 Excavations in Asia Minor have shown the close connections that existed between these Jewish communities and their pagan neighbors. Such could possibly explain their sympathetic attitude. See, for instance, Louis H. Feldman, "Proselytes and 'Sympathizers' in Light of the New Inscriptions from Aphrodisias," *REJ* 148 (1989): 265-303.

39 This idea is also found in earlier pre-Hellenistic texts such as Micah 4:1-5/Isa 2:2-4. Although some would argue that these passages are later interpolations, there is no consensus on this. For salvation for the gentiles in pre-Hellenistic writings, see also Third Isaiah, especially Isa 66:18-19.

Unlike Tobit, the author of Zechariah 14 does not envision a full conversion by the gentiles. Rather, according to this text, they would simply acknowledge YHWH as God and celebrate the festival of *Sukkoth* annually in Jerusalem.

But there were other Jewish groups that understood the eventual fate of the gentiles quite differently. Some of these groups anticipated that the gentiles would ultimately stand condemned before God. For example, the *Testament of Moses* states:

[God] created the world on behalf of his people, but he did not make this purpose of creation openly known from the beginning of the world so that the nations might be found guilty (1:12–13).

While this text does not specify any particular reason for the guilt of the nations (i.e., the gentiles), other Jewish texts connect the condemnation of the gentiles with their ignorance or neglect of the Torah.⁴⁰ The first century *LAB* provides a good example:

And [God] said to Moses, “Behold I will call you tomorrow; be prepared and tell my people, ‘For three days let no man approach his wife,’ and on the third day I will speak to you and to them. And afterward you will come up to me, and I will put my words in your mouth, and you will enlighten my people, for I have given an everlasting Law into your hands and by this I will judge the whole world. For this will be a testimony. For even if men say, ‘We have not known you, and so we have not served you’ therefore I will make a claim upon them because they have not learned my Law (11:2).”

According to this text, at the time that God gave the Torah to Moses, he also informed him that the whole world would be judged by the Law. The deity here insists that the gentiles would not be excused because of their ignorance of either himself or the Torah. Rather, they will be held accountable “because they have not learned [the] Law.”

Two Jewish apocalypses, *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, also reflect the opinion that God expected the gentiles to keep the commandments of the Torah. The author of the former foretells that, at the time of judgment:

40 Note that both Philo (*Moses* 2 17–22) and Josephus (*Contra Apionem* 2.279–80) speak of the applicability (or at least the beneficiality) of the Torah to all humanity. They do not, however, go so far as to suggest that all would be held accountable to it.

The Most High will say to the nations (*gentes*) [after they] have been raised from the dead, “Look now, and understand whom you have denied, whom you have not served, whose commandments you have despised . . . there for you are fire and torments!” (7:37–38)

Those addressed here, as the term “nations” (*gentes*) indicates, are clearly the gentiles. The author of this text, like the author of *LAB*, believes that the gentiles should expect punishment because they have despised God’s “commandments,” that is to say, the Torah.⁴¹ They would, as a result, stand condemned before God at the eschaton. Later in the work, the author speaks even more explicitly of the reason for the gentiles’ condemnation:

Those who dwell on earth shall be tormented because though they had understanding, they committed iniquity, and though they received the commandments they did not keep them, and though they obtained the Law, they dealt unfaithfully with what they received (7:72).

This passage, like that cited above, indicates that “those who dwell on earth” had “received the commandments” and “obtained the Law.” It seems reasonable to suppose that this group would have included the gentiles. It was expected that they, along with the unfaithful Jews, would stand condemned before God because they had rejected his commandments.

Another apocalypse, 2 *Baruch*, likewise reflects the idea that gentiles would be destroyed at the eschaton because of their neglect of the Torah. According to that document’s narrative, the character Baruch writes to those tribes in exile:

But you ought to know that our creator will surely avenge us on all our brothers according to everything which they have done against us and among us; in particular that the end which the Most High prepared is near, and his grace is coming, and that the fulfillment of his judgment is not far. For now we see the multitude of the happiness of the nations although they have acted wickedly; but they are like vapor. And we behold the multitude of their power while they acted impiously; but they will be made like a drop. And we see the strength of their power while they resist the Mighty One every hour; but they will be reckoned like spittle.

41 It is important to note that, as Michael Stone points out, “it is inappropriate to see here a reference to the Noachid commandments or the like.” See his *Fourth Ezra*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 194–95.

And we will ponder about the glory of their majesty while they do not keep the statutes of the Most High; but as smoke they will pass away. And we will think about the beauty of their gracefulness while they go down in impurities; but like the grass which is withering, they will fade away. And we ponder about the strength of their cruelty while they themselves do not think about the end; but they will be broken like a passing wave. And we notice the pride of their power while they deny the goodness of God by whom it was given to them; but as a passing cloud they will vanish (82:2–9).

Throughout these verses, the author posits a series of contrasts between the present good fortune of the gentiles and their evil actions. At the end of each contrast, the ultimate fate of the gentiles is articulated. Most notable for our purposes is the sentence in which the “glory of [the gentiles’] majesty” is contrasted with their behavior: “they do not keep the statutes of the Most High.”⁴² The result is their eschatological destruction: “like smoke they will pass away.”

In yet another text, the third *Sibylline Oracle* (573–600), the Jews are eulogized by the author because they and they alone have “shared in the righteousness of the Law of the Most High” (580). The text names various peoples, including the Phoenicians, the Egyptians, the Romans, the Greeks, and the Persians (among others), all of whom have “[transgressed] the holy Law of immortal God” (600).⁴³ As a result, these gentiles would suffer “disaster and famine and woes and groans and war and pestilence and lamentable ills” (602–603).

All of these works assume that the Law was intended not just for the Jews but for all of humanity. The fact that the gentiles ignored the Torah (while the Jews did not) would, according to some of these texts, bring about their punishment or destruction. In light of these findings, it seems possible and even reasonable to assume that Paul thought along the same lines. However, before we apply what we have seen here to 2 Corinthians 3, we must ask if there is any evidence within Paul’s writings to suggest that *he* believed that the gentiles would be held responsible for the Torah’s commands.

42 Cf. 2 Bar. 48:39–43.

43 In this particular context, the transgression is specifically a sexual one (“impious intercourse with male children”) rather than law observance in general. Nevertheless, the point remains that gentiles are expected to keep the “Law of the Most High.”

Gentiles and the Torah in Paul's Other Writings

The idea that God would hold the gentiles as well as the Jews accountable to the requirements of the Torah is an idea that, while not explicitly stated by Paul, seems to be presupposed by some of his writings, particularly his letter to the Galatians. In Gal 3:10, for example, Paul mentions, “those whose identity is derived from observance of the Law” (ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου).⁴⁴ He makes the claim in that verse that these people are cursed and cites as proof, Deut 27:26: “Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the Law.” It is not clear who Paul intends with the expression ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου. It is possible that he is focused only on the Torah-observant here.⁴⁵ If that is indeed the case, then it is clear that within a few verses he shifts the focus of his comments. The shift is signalled by the change from the third person (ὅσοι)—employed in 3:10–12—to the first person in the verses that follow. In these later verses (3:13–14), Paul’s language suggests that the “curse of the Law” applies not just to the Law observant (i.e., the Jews) but to everyone:

¹³ Christ redeemed *us* from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for *us*—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’—¹⁴ in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that *we* might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Paul’s focus is now on a group that he labels “us,” a group whose identity apparently encompasses *all* followers of Christ. In the words of Heikki Räisänen:

At first glance it seems natural to think that “we” in v. 13 refers to Paul and other *Jewish* Christians—it is only they that had been under the Torah before becoming Christians. Several reasons, however, speak against this explanation. In v. 14b the “we” must in any case refer also to the Galatian gentile Christians; the mention of the Spirit ties with vv. 2–5. Now it would be strange, if the pronoun tacitly changed its reference in v. 14. There is

44 The translation, “those whose identity is derived from observance of the Law” comes from J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 307.

45 There have been various suggestions about the identity of ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου. Many would argue that these are Jews (both those who follow Christ and those who do not). See, for example, Betz, *Galatians*, 144–46. Others have argued that it represents the gentiles who would turn to Torah observance. See, for example, Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 71. The circumstances that gave rise to this text are hotly disputed. For a discussion of some of the options, see Martyn, *Galatians*, 307–12.

no indication of any contrast between the “us” of v. 13 and the “gentile” of v. 14; unlike 2:14ff. Paul does not deal with the difference between the Jews and gentiles at all in this passage. And how could the redemption of the Jews from the curse of the Law bring blessings on the gentiles? The context does not speak of the removal of the wall between the two races; Paul is explicating the liberty of the Galatians which is connected with the crucifixion. . . . Strange as it may appear, the conclusion is hard to avoid that even the *gentiles* were, in Paul’s mind when dictating this passage, *under the curse of the Law*.⁴⁶

As Räisänen reads Paul, everyone—whether Jew or gentile—has been “redeemed . . . from the curse of the Law.”⁴⁷ Of course, if gentiles were indeed under the curse at one time, it must be because they did not abide by it.

A number of verses later, beginning at 3:19, Paul focuses on the purpose of the Torah by asking, “Why then the Law?” Again, as in 3:13–14, the apostle shifts to the first person within the space of a few verses (3:23–25) in order to address the plight of *all* humanity, gentiles included:

²³ Now before faith came, *we* were imprisoned (ἐφρουρούμεθα) and guarded under the Law until faith would be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the Law was our disciplinarian (παιδαγωγός) until Christ came, so that *we* might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, *we* are no longer subject to a disciplinarian . . .

These verses—which speak of *our* imprisonment (ἐφρουρούμεθα) under the Law (3:23) and furthermore label the Law *our* παιδαγωγός (3:24)—likewise appear to focus not just on the predicament of the Jews before the coming of Christ; rather, they address the situation faced by all. Both Jew and gentile alike, Paul seems to contend, “were imprisoned . . . under the Law.”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 2nd ed. WUNT 29 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1983), 19–20.

⁴⁷ Cf. Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater*, 14th ed. KEK 7 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 136–38; George Howard, *Paul: Crisis in Galatia*, SNTSMS 35 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 66–82; Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 81–82; Hans Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought*, Trans. James C.G. Greig (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1984), 150–51; Stowers, *Rereading of Romans*, 112; Martinus C. de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 200, 209.

⁴⁸ Räisänen, *Paul*, 20; Hübner, *Law*, 35; Martyn, *Galatians*, 361–62; de Boer, *Galatians*, 238.

Finally, in chapter 4 of the same letter, Paul again employs the first person “we” in his discussion of enslavement under the “elemental spirits of the world” (τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου) and the Torah:⁴⁹

³ So with us; while we were minors, we were enslaved to the elemental spirits of the world (τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου). ⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, ⁵ in order to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as children. ⁶ And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ ⁷ As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ⁸ There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Although the problem of the relationship between τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου and the Torah in these verses is too complex to be addressed here, this passage nevertheless makes it abundantly clear that Paul in some way regarded gentiles (as well as Jews) as being “under the Law” (4:5).⁵⁰ All, according to this passage, were in need of redemption.

Although various other Pauline texts could also be brought in to demonstrate the apostle’s belief that gentiles, prior to their turn to Christ, would have been held accountable for their neglect of the Torah, these texts from Galatians should suffice for our purposes.⁵¹ They suggest that Paul believed that—following the delivery of the Torah to Moses—all humanity (gentiles included!)

49 J. Louis Martyn suggests that Paul here is involved in a kind of language game focused on pronouns. He brings this game to a climax in Gal 4:3–6, “unmasking all purported distinctions in the human race” (*Galatians*, 334–36).

50 Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 68–70.

51 For example, in Rom 1:18–2:16, Paul seems to argue in a similar way. Also, in Rom 2:13–15, he argues that “. . . it is not the hearers of the Law who are righteous in God’s sight, but the doers of the Law who will be justified.” When Gentiles, who do not possess the Law, do instinctively what the Law requires, these, though not having the Law, are a Law to themselves. They show that what the Law requires is written on their hearts. . . . Likewise, in Rom 2:27, Paul seems to indicate one of two things. Either, he means to say that, although Moses brought the written Torah to the Jews, nevertheless gentiles have had access to it in some way or another and were expected to keep its statutes (Stowers, *Rereading of Romans*, 116) or that, even without access to it, they will nevertheless be held accountable to act as righteously as the Torah demands (Neil Elliott, *The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul’s Dialogue with Judaism*, in *JSNTSS* 45 [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990], 190). Note the comment of Heikki Räisänen, “the accumulation

would be held accountable to its requirements. In light of this, it seems possible to understand why Paul labeled Moses' ministry, "a ministry of death" in 2 Cor 3:7 and "a ministry of condemnation" in 3:9. Paul refers to Moses' ministry in such a way because, from his perspective, that ministry brought condemnation and the sentence of death *to the gentiles*; in their previous existence—estranged from God—they had ignored the Torah.

However, before we definitively conclude that Paul's reference to Moses' ministry of death and condemnation points to the condemnation of the (Corinthian) gentiles for their neglect of the Torah, we must ask if it is likely that Paul would have associated the δόξα of the deity with condemnation and death. In order to answer that question, in the next section we will briefly look at the function of the language of "glory" (כבוד/δόξα) in the Hebrew scriptures and other Jewish writings in connection with the punishment of the unrighteous.

The Connection between God's Glory and Judgment/Punishment

In the literature of Israel's early monarchy, the language of "glory" (כבוד) had as its focus the presence of the deity (i.e., his "glory," כבוד) in the Jerusalem temple and the stability that came about in both nature and human relationships as a result.⁵² God would bless the kingdom, according to the royal ideology, as long as the glory of YHWH (כבוד יהוה) dwelt securely in the sanctuary.⁵³ As Ps 26:8 indicates:

O YHWH, I love the house in which you dwell,
and the place where your glory (כבוד) abides.

While the deity's presence was certainly not thought to be limited to the sanctuary in Jerusalem as the above passage might suggest, the temple was nevertheless accorded special status as the earthly abode of the glory of YHWH. The

of parallel cases proves that we are not just faced with occasional careless phrasing" (Paul, 21).

52 For a graphic description of the arrival of the deity's "glory" (כבוד) into Solomon's temple (albeit in later literature), see 1 Kgs 8:6–11; 2 Chr 6:14; 7:1–2.

53 The enthronement of YHWH, the "king of glory," in his sanctuary is graphically described in Ps 24, an early psalm likely composed to accompany the procession of the ark into the temple. In this psalm, the gates of the city are enjoined to "lift up [their] heads" in order "that the king of glory may come in" to his temple. The climax of the procession was the appearance of the כבוד יהוה.

ark, like the temple, was also closely associated with God's glory and the story of its capture by the Philistines shows a clear connection between the deity's glory and judgment or punishment of non-Israelites.

According to the author of 1 Samuel, after the ark had been captured by the Philistines, the daughter-in-law of Eli—the judge who had fallen over and died when he heard the news of it—gave birth to a son and, “She named the child Ichabod meaning, ‘The glory has departed from Israel,’ because the ark of God had been captured” (1 Sam 4:12). The Philistines, to their detriment, did not fully appreciate their vulnerability when faced with the vessel of YHWH's כבוד. When they first took it to the city of Ashdod, it not only toppled the image of the deity Dagon, it also caused cancerous growths on the people of the city. As the Hebrew text tells us (with a pun): “the hand of YHWH was heavy (תכבד, i.e., “כבוד-ish”) on the people of Ashdod (1 Sam 5:6).”⁵⁴ The ark was then sent to two other Philistine cities, Gath and Ekron, which suffered similar disasters (1 Sam 5:8–10). Because of the calamities that befell the various cities into which the ark (with its attendant “glory”) was taken, it was eventually returned to Israel (1 Sam 6:1–10). As we can see from this story, the presence or absence of YHWH's glory had a different result depending on the group affected. The loss of YHWH's כבוד was disastrous for *Israel* because, according to the prevailing belief, she was left vulnerable to her enemies. But conversely, the presence of YHWH's glory among *non-Israelites* (and particularly the enemies of Israel) was catastrophic for them as well.

Faced with conquest by foreign powers, other writers pointed to the retreat of the deity's כבוד as the cause of Judah's vulnerability.⁵⁵ Ezekiel, for example, describes the gradual retreat of YHWH's כבוד from the land because of the population's unfaithfulness. YHWH's glory first departed the temple (9:3; 10:4; and 10:18) and then finally it left the city itself (10:19; 11:22–23). This ultimately left Jerusalem vulnerable to the Babylonians. Conversely, exilic and post-exilic authors wrote of the return of the כבוד יהוה to Jerusalem following the Babylonian exile. The author of Deutero-Isaiah, for example, writing from Babylon shortly before the exile's end, recounts that Jerusalem had “served her term” and that she had paid the penalty for her sins. The author then foretells the return of the YHWH's glory to that city:

54 Newman, *Glory Christology*, 48.

55 Cf. Hos 10:5–6 which sarcastically comments on the loss of the כבוד of the calf set up by Jereboam.

A voice cries out:

'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

Then the glory of YHWH (כבוד יהוה) shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken' (Isa 40:3–5).

The prophet Ezekiel, who had earlier depicted the retreat of YHWH's כבוד from the city, likewise predicted the eventual return of God's glory to Jerusalem, with the result that, "the glory of YHWH [would fill] the temple of YHWH" (Ezek 44:4; cf. 43:2–5).⁵⁶

But elsewhere Ezekiel also ties the deity's כבוד to God's judgment on Israel's enemies, something that is much more significant for our purposes. Early in chapter 39, the prophet speaks of the destruction of Gog, a figure symbolizing all of Israel's enemies.⁵⁷

¹ And you, mortal, prophesy against Gog, and say: Thus says the Lord God: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal! ² I will turn you round and drive you forwards, and bring you up from the remotest parts of the north, and lead you against the mountains of Israel. ³ I will strike your bow from your left hand, and will make your arrows drop out of your right hand. ⁴ You shall fall in the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples that are with you; I will give you to birds of prey of every kind and to the wild animals to be devoured (Ezek 39:1–4).

56 Following the exile, the author of Isa 60:1–3 wrote of the כבוד יהוה as a great light that would provide illumination for the people. The return of God's glory would outshine the sun and the moon (cf. Rev 21:11, 29). In turn, it would ultimately result in both the righteousness of the people of Judah and their security. Among other texts, see also Zech 2:1–5; Isa 35:1–2; 40: 1–11; 58:8–9. See also Newman, *Glory Christology*, 62–66.

57 For the idea that Gog stands for all Israel's enemies, see Ezek 38:5–6 where the prophet places, in connection with Gog, the following: Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, and Beth-Togarmah (probably all peoples from Asia Minor), as well as Persia, Ethiopia, and Put (Libya).

Following the destruction of Gog, we see the above-mentioned consumption of the fallen bodies depicted as a “sacrificial feast”:

¹⁷ As for you, mortal, thus says the Lord God: Speak to the birds of every kind and to all the wild animals: Assemble and come, gather from all around to the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you, a great sacrificial feast on the mountains of Israel, and you shall eat flesh and drink blood. ¹⁸ You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth—of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan. ¹⁹ You shall eat fat until you are filled, and drink blood until you are drunk, at the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you. ²⁰ And you shall be filled at my table with horses and charioteers, with warriors and all kinds of soldiers, says the Lord God.

Thus far, we have not encountered a reference to the glory of the deity. However, in the verses that immediately follow the description of the gruesome banquet, the deity closely connects his judgment against “the nations” with his glory:

I will display my glory (כבודי) among the nations (בגוים); and all the nations shall see my judgment (משפטי) that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them (Ezek 39:21).

The display of God’s glory that we see in this particular verse is explicitly identified with the deity’s act of laying his hand on the nations, an act resulting in their destruction.⁵⁸

In the later apocalyptic literature of Judaism, the judgment of God continued to be associated with his “glory.” Several examples appear in the *Hodayot* of Qumran. One text claims:

... the wicked you created for the purpose of your wrath, and from the womb you dedicated them for the day of slaughter. For they walk in the way that is not good, and they despise your covenant, and their soul abhors your statutes. They do not take pleasure in anything that you have

⁵⁸ The identification of God’s glory and judgment is reinforced by the chiasm found in 39:21a:

A I will display my glory
 B among the nations;
 B and all the nations
 A shall see my judgment.

commanded, but they choose what you hate. For you determined them for the ages of your wrath in order to execute great judgments upon them in the sight of all your creatures, and to be a sign and portent for everlasting generations, so that all may know your glory (כבוד) and your great strength (1QH^a 7.30–33).⁵⁹

According to this passage, the wicked were specifically created by God so that all would recognize the “glory” of the deity by his judgment over them. Although the wicked here are most likely to be identified with the community’s Jewish opponents rather than gentiles, nevertheless, the connection between God’s judgment against his enemies and his glory is evident.

Another of the *Hodayot* hymns also effectively demonstrates the connection between the deity’s glory and judgment. But in this particular passage, universal judgment is in view.⁶⁰ In the following scene, the truth of God’s glory is manifested by the destruction wrought in the cosmos:

And the torrents of Belial shall break through to Abaddon, and the structures of the deep shall roar at the noise of those who cast up mire. And the land shall cry out on account of the destruction which has come upon the world, and all its structures scream, and all who are upon it go mad and shake to pieces in the great destruction. For God thunders with his powerful roar, and his holy dwelling resounds with the truth of his glory (כבוד). The host of heaven shall raise its voice, and the eternal foundations shall shake and tremble. The war of the champions of heaven shall sweep through the world and not turn back until full consummation. It is wholly determined and there shall be nothing like it (1QH^a 11.33–35).⁶¹

Here, the ultimate cosmic struggle between good and evil is envisioned. The destructive power of evil is rendered in this text as the bursting of the “torrents of Belial.” However, the appearance of God’s glory signals the end of evil and the victory of the heavenly host. As the text claims, nothing can stop it—“it is wholly determined”—and “there shall be nothing like it.”

59 Trans. Newsome in Hartmut Stegemann, Eileen Schuller, and Carol Newsom, *1QHodayot^a; With Incorporation of 1QHodayot^b and 4QHodayot^{a–f}*, Discoveries in the Judean Desert (Oxford: Clarendon, 2009).

60 Newman, *Glory Christology*, 105.

61 Trans. Newsom (slightly emended) in Stegemann, Schuller, and Newsom, *1QHodayot^a*. Thanks to Christopher Rollston for assistance with this text.

In the Enochic literature (particularly in the *Similitudes*), glory is likewise associated with judgment. Curiously, in the *Similitudes*, glory is associated not directly with the deity himself (the Lord of the Spirits) but with the throne that the Lord of Spirits shares with the Son of Man. That throne is designated the “throne of his glory.”

The Lord of the Spirits has now sat down on the throne of his glory, and the spirit of righteousness has been poured out upon him. The word of his mouth will do the sinners in; and all the oppressors shall be eliminated from before his face. On the day of judgment, all the kings, the governors, the high officials, and the landlords shall see and recognize him—how he sits on the throne of his glory, and righteousness is judged before him, and that no nonsensical talk shall be uttered in his presence. Then pain shall come upon them as on a woman in travail with birth pangs—when she is giving birth [the child] enters the mouth of the womb and she suffers from childbearing. One half portion of them shall glance at the other half; they shall be terrified and dejected; and pain shall seize them when they see that Son of Man sitting on the throne of his glory. . . . So the Lord of the Spirits will deliver them to the angels for punishment in order that vengeance shall be executed upon them—oppressors of his children and his elect ones (62:2–5, 11).

As the above passage so dramatically indicates, it is from this “throne of glory” that judgment is rendered against those that oppress the deity’s “children and elect ones.”⁶²

A passage similar to that found in the *Similitudes* appears in the New Testament, in the Gospel of Matthew. Following Peter’s claim that the disciples had left everything to follow Jesus, the latter responds:

Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things (παλιγγενεσία), when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (19:28).

62 See also 1 *En.* 45:1–3; 55:3–4; 61:8; 69:29 as cited by Newman, *Glory Christology*, 87–90. A more direct connection between “glory” and the deity appears in an earlier Enochic work, the *Book of the Watchers*. However, in that work, the glory of the deity is associated less explicitly with the judgment of the wicked.

This passage, like that from the *Similitudes* cited above, also refers to the Son of Man (obviously here meaning Jesus) seated on “the throne of his glory,” presumably dispensing universal judgment.

From the various texts that we have looked at, we can see that there exists within the Jewish tradition a connection between the “glory” of God and the deity’s judgment or punishment of his enemies. Sometimes this “glorious” judgment is directed exclusively against “the nations” as in 1 Samuel 5 or Ezekiel 39. At other times, however, a universal judgment is envisioned as in the writings of Qumran, the Enochic literature, and the Gospel of Matthew. Because of the strong connection between the deity’s glory and God’s judgment over his enemies within the literature of Judaism, the suggestion that Paul would tie δόξα to condemnatory judgment is neither problematic or suprising. To the contrary, the connection between glory and judgment strengthens the suggestion that Moses’ glorious ministry of death and condemnation (2 Cor 3:7–9) points to God’s condemnation of the gentiles. In light of this conclusion, a couple of questions about Paul’s argument in 3:7–11 emerge. First, what does Paul mean when he makes the claim in 3:7 that the δόξα of Moses’ διακονία was καταργουμένη? Second, for what rhetorical reason did Paul label Moses’ διακονία in the way that he did (particularly as a “ministry of death”)? How could his use of such labels advance his self-defense?

Determining the correct meaning of the term καταργουμένη as it applies to the διακονία of Moses in 3:7 is our first task. A number of past translations rendered the term καταργουμένη in a manner to suggest that the glory on Moses’ face was “fading.”⁶³ Others, however, have correctly pointed out that the verb καταργέω does not mean “to fade.” They have argued instead that it should be translated as “annulled” or “abolished.”⁶⁴ In general, this latter group of scholars understands Paul’s use of the participle καταργουμένη here as indicating that the old covenant has been superseded. For example, Barrett suggests that:

[Paul uses the term καταργουμένη] because the main theme of his argument is that the law (at least the law understood in terms of letter) and the covenant based upon law are being done away with and replaced by a new covenant based on Spirit.⁶⁵

63 These include the CEB, NAS, and NIV (1984 version). Cf. also Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 83.

64 Cf. BAGD, s. v., 2.

65 Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 116. Cf. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 226–28 and Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 243–44.

Barrett here, like most others, assumes that by using the participle *καταργουμένη* here, Paul is implicitly contrasting covenants. The old Mosaic covenant has been “done away with.” It has been replaced by the new. However, it is important to note first, that Paul uses the term *διακονία* (“ministry”) throughout this section, not *διαθήκη* (“covenant”).⁶⁶ I contend that Paul’s use of *διακονία* here (instead of *διαθήκη*) is intentional. While the *παλαιὰ διαθήκη*, mentioned in 5:14, clearly has Israel as its focus, Moses’ *διακονία* in this part of Paul’s argument (3:7–11) does not; it centers on the fate of the gentiles.

But if Paul is not talking here about the old covenant being annulled and subsequently replaced by the new, what is he arguing? In light of the connection that we have seen between punishment/judgment and glory, I suggest that we understand *καταργουμένη* here as referring to the negative effects of Moses’ ministry on the gentiles. In other words, Paul’s ministry of Spirit and righteousness has rendered powerless the condemnatory *δόξα* of Moses’ ministry on the (gentile) Corinthians.⁶⁷ This is the reason that Paul attaches the participle *καταργουμένη* to the *δόξα* of Moses’ *διακονία* in 3:7 (i.e., the *δόξα* on the lawgiver’s face).

The second question asks why Paul labels Moses’ ministry the way that he does. Of particular concern is the reason he initially labels the lawgiver’s *διακονία* a “ministry of death.” Since Paul’s concern focuses on the condemnation of the gentile Corinthians as a result of the lawgiver’s ministry, it might have seemed more beneficial to lead with *ἡ διακονία τοῦ κατακρίσεως* (“the ministry of righteousness”), the label that Paul applies to Moses’ ministry in the second conditional sentence (in 3:9). However, the association of death with Moses’ ministry plays an important role in Paul’s apology and it also demonstrates an important connection of 3:7–11 with the verses that precede it.

66 As a quick glance at the commentaries will show, scholars tend to conflate the terms “ministry” and “covenant” when discussing 2 Cor 3:7–11. Thrall, for example, in her discussion of this section, interchanges the terms freely. In one place, she states, “Moses’ *ministry* was glorious,” in another (on the very same page, speaking about the same text) she claims, “the *old covenant* possessed glory” (*Second Epistle*, 240, my emphasis).

67 For *καταργέω* as “to make powerless or ineffective,” see BAGD, s.v., 1. In this sense, it is reasonable to understand *τὸ καταργούμενον* at the end of the section (which Paul sets against *τὸ μένον*) as referring to the transitory nature of Moses’ ministry. Paul is neither here nor in 3:7 focused on the transience of the Law itself but instead on the temporary nature of its condemnation of gentiles. While the condemnation brought by Moses’ ministry is still in effect, it has, nevertheless, been rendered powerless against those gentiles who, like Moses, have “turned to the Lord” (cf. 3:16). For that group of gentiles, the *δόξα* of Paul’s ministry of righteousness (3:9) and reconciliation applies (cf. 5:18).

As we saw in the previous chapter, Paul opens the letter with the image of the deity leading him in triumph (2:14). The image, seen in one way, evokes the triumphal procession in which prisoners of war were led to their execution. As such, it reflects the suspicions of some in the community: Paul's suffering represents the deity's punishment of Paul. He is being led to his death by God, punished for his attempt to defraud the community. It is against this background that we should view the initial label that Paul applies to Moses' διακονία.

When Paul uses the label ἡ διακονία τοῦ θανάτου in 2 Cor 3:7, he is attempting to ironically turn the tables on those in the community who have interpreted his suffering as God's punishment. Here, he not only replies to suspicions about his suffering, but he also turns the accusation around by reminding the Corinthians of their condemnation (due to their pagan origins). In effect, he says, "you might think that *I* am under the divine sentence of death but, in fact, it was *you* gentiles who were condemned to death by Moses' διακονία before I arrived." His response is clever and to the point. If the Corinthians want to play by the old rules (i.e., according to the ministry of the letter), then they are the ones under the sentence of death. But, as their past experience has demonstrated to them, the διακονία of Spirit (introduced to them by Paul) has rendered their condemnation under the letter powerless. They of all people should therefore recognize that the new reality consists of more than that which is conventionally written. Paul will return to this point in the next section where he will argue that with transformation (i.e., conversion) comes transformed perception.

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen how Paul, in his *a minore ad maius* argument of 3:7–11, fully clarifies the meaning of the statement that concludes the previous section: "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." The oppositions set out by Paul in 3:6b—letter and Spirit/life and death—lead the way for his juxtaposition of the two ministries, his own and that of Moses, in the verses that follow. As the basis for this juxtaposition, Paul alludes to the narrative found in Exod 34:29–35, a text that tells the story of Moses' glorified face at the time of his second descent from Sinai. Paul employs an argument *a minore ad maius* to set his ministry beside that of the Lawgiver. The relationship that the apostle draws between his διακονία and that of Moses is, however, not one-dimensional.

Rather, over the course of the argument, Paul simultaneously moves in two directions. First, he *compares* the glory of his ministry to that of the

paradigmatic ministry of Moses. He argues in 3:7–11 that just as the δόξα of God was present with Moses when he came down from Sinai with the Torah, so too God's δόξα attends his own ministry. As we have discovered, given the way that an *a minore ad maius* argument works, the presence of God's glory in both ministries clearly represents the focus of Paul's argument. But, the apostle is not content to simply set his ministry on the same level with that of the great lawgiver Moses. Rather, he contends that the glory of his own ministry outstrips that of the ministry of Moses to such a degree that the latter *seems* to possess no glory at all (3:10).

This leads us to the second dimension of Paul's argument in which he adds opposition to his claim. Despite Paul's assertion that δόξα attends both ministries, he nevertheless insists that in some ways Moses' ministry stands in contrast to his own. His ministry of Spirit and righteousness stands over against Moses' ministry of death and condemnation. By labeling Moses' ministry in this way, he tells the Corinthians that, despite the accompaniment of God's glory, or more accurately, *because of it*, Moses' ministry was a ministry of death for them because, as gentiles, they stood condemned by the product of that ministry, the Torah. Here, Paul ironically reflects the suspicions about his own situation. Those who see his ministry as a ministry of death (and, as such, refuse to acknowledge themselves as Paul's Spirit inscribed commendatory epistle) are themselves still subject to the Mosaic ministry of death, a ministry inscribed ἐν γράμμασιν (i.e., conventionally). Although, on the surface, it may seem odd that Paul would associate the δόξα of the deity with Moses' ministry of death and condemnation, such an association has deep roots in the Jewish tradition.

In effect, Paul lays before the Corinthians a choice: they are either subject to Moses' glorious ministry of death and condemnation or his own more glorious ministry of Spirit and righteousness. In either case, the deity's δόξα is demonstrated: either by the condemnation of his enemies, the gentiles (as we saw above) or by his offer of reconciliation (i.e., righteousness) to them. In short, the Corinthians may either experience the glory of God in his punishing judgment or by way of his reconciling Spirit. By laying such a choice before the Corinthians, Paul again returns to the idea of letters of recommendation raised in the previous section (3:1–3). If the Corinthians will not acknowledge themselves as his "letter" of recommendation, that means, he implicitly claims, that they are not transformed. This is because it is their very transformation that Paul claims as proof of his legitimacy (i.e., his "letter") as an envoy of God. Consequently, their insistence on a conventionally-written letter indicates that, since they have not been transformed, they would still be subject to Moses' ministry of letter (γράμμα), a ministry that has brought condemnation to them.

Not Like Moses? (2 Cor 3:12–18)

Introduction

As in the previous passage (3:7–11), Moses likewise figures prominently in the final section of 2 Corinthians 3 (3:12–18). But in this section, the lawgiver plays a number of different roles. In his first incarnation, as *διάκονος* of God, the lawgiver appears in a somewhat unfavorable light (3:12–13); he is described as having veiled his face before the Israelites to obstruct their perception. Curiously, Paul's claim about Moses here runs counter to the narrative of Exodus (34:29–35) for, in that earlier text, there is no indication that the lawgiver intended to conceal anything from Israel. In fact, according to the Exodus narrative, Moses did not veil himself *at all* when he spoke to Israel; it was only *after* he had finished speaking to them that he covered his face.

Although Paul's narrative strays from the Exodus narrative, his divergence from the biblical text here not unprecedented. As we saw in the previous chapter, while Jewish writers paid a great deal of attention to the narrative of Exod 34:29–35, their interpretations sometimes deviated from the original.¹ But, it is important to note that, despite the willingness of various Jewish interpreters to alter the plain sense of the Exodus text, Paul's particular way of modifying the narrative is unique. No other Jewish interpretation suggests that Moses, by veiling his face, intentionally concealed anything from Israel. Rather, other interpretations usually posit the lawgiver's motivation for covering his face as arising from his desire to protect Israel from the overwhelming power of the deity's glory.² As we will see, the way that Paul contrasts his behavior with that of Moses in these early verse of the section plays an important role in his apologetic project.

1 Cf. Linda L. Belleville, "Tradition or Creation? Paul's Use of the Exodus Tradition in 2 Corinthians 3:7–18," in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 165–86. See also chapter 5 above.

2 Cf. *LAB* 12.1 and *Pesiq. Rab.* 10.6 (cited above, chapter 5). That which comes closest to Paul's use is the Samaritan *Memar Marqa* 6.11 which claims that the purpose of Moses' veil was to magnify the illumination of the deity's glory so that Israel would not look at Moses' face (cf. Belleville, "Tradition," 178). But in this case the purpose seems to have been to protect the glory of God, not to hide anything in particular from Israel.

The second of Paul's portraits of the lawgiver in this section features Moses as a text (3:14–15). It is important to note that the apostle does not at all disparage "Moses" in this capacity. However, although Moses the text is not deprecated in these verses, Paul's Jewish contemporaries are. They are portrayed by the apostle as incapable of reading "Moses" accurately, because, as Paul points out in 3:14b, their reading has been obstructed by "the same veil" that blocked the vision of Moses for those of the wilderness generation. Due to the importance that Paul places on Israel, and in particular, the Jews of Paul's time in these verses, the emphasis on Moses diminishes. This shift in emphasis raises the important question: why is Paul so interested in Israel here? And, more importantly, how does his focus on Israel here play into his apologetic efforts?

In Paul's third depiction of Moses, beginning in 3:16, Paul not only depicts the lawgiver in a highly positive light, he also sets him up as a model for believers. This portrayal of Moses represents a significant shift in emphasis. Earlier in the letter, Paul had employed the figure of Moses in order to compare the lawgiver to himself. But in these last few verses of the chapter, the apostle enlarges Moses' role. Particularly significant here is Paul's portrayal of the lawgiver as one who had seen the deity's glory with an unveiled face. As Moses had seen "the glory of the Lord" unimpeded, so too, contends Paul, do the gentile believers in his own communities. But why does Paul use Moses in such a different way here? As we will see, Paul's use of Moses as a paradigm for believers also comes to play a vital role in his apology.

In the following pages, we will examine each of these portraits of Moses in turn. We will ask why the apostle depicted the lawgiver in these various ways and we will also inquire about the apologetic role that each of these incarnations plays. In addition, we will investigate the apostle's representation of Israel and consider the role that the Israelites, and especially the Jews of Paul's time, play in the apology.

Moses the Veiled Envoy: 2 Cor 3:12–13

In the first two verses of the section (3:12–13), Moses appears—as he had in the previous sections—as a δῆκονος ("envoy") of the deity. Furthermore, as in the passage immediately prior (3:7–11), the apostle again alludes to the narrative of Moses drawn from Exod 34:29–35. But, here we see something quite different than we had in the earlier section. First, although Paul mentioned Moses in relation to Israel in the previous section (3:7), his real focus there was on the lawgiver (and in particular the lawgiver's ministry) in relation to the gentiles. That is to say, in 3:7–11, Paul emphasized that the διακονία of Moses brought

condemnation and death to the gentiles. In 3:12–18, however, the apostle concentrates on Moses' role vis-à-vis Israel, both in the past and at Paul's time. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the apostle's primary purpose in the section immediately prior (3:7–11) was to draw a *comparison* between the glory of his own ministry and that of Moses. But in 3:12–13, Paul instead draws a sharp contrast between himself and the lawgiver. Indeed, he claims that, in his actions, he is *not* like Moses (οὐ καθάπερ Μωϋσῆς). The latter veiled his face before Israel after his descent from Sinai; Paul, to the contrary, claims to act "with great *παρρησία*" (πολλῇ παρρησίᾳ χρώμεθα) before the Corinthians. What does he mean when he claims *παρρησία* for himself?³

The Greek term *παρρησία* is normally translated something like "outspokenness," or "boldness."⁴ As such, it has a rich history in both the Greek political and philosophical traditions.⁵ In the classical world of the Greek *polis*, *παρρησία* expressed the right and ability of every citizen to speak his mind, to "say everything" (πᾶς-ῥήσις).⁶ Following the decline of civic democracy during the Hellenistic period, the term gained popularity among philosophers and particularly among the Cynics. For them, *παρρησία* came to represent not the right of the citizen but the duty of the wise man to speak and act with *παρρησία* regardless of the consequences.⁷ Paul's use of *παρρησία* in 2 Cor 3:12 likely

3 Paul insists that this *παρρησία* arises from his hope (ἐλπίς), "Since then we have such a hope, we act with great *παρρησία*." But, to what does this hope refer? While scholars typically explain Paul's profession of hope in terms of the hope shared by all believers (i.e., the hope focused on the new eschatological reality brought about by the crucifixion), such an explanation neglects to account for the apologetic character of 2:14–7:4. In the apologetic context of 2:14–7:4, Paul's hope concerns his self-understanding as an envoy (διάκονος) of the deity, specifically a διάκονος of a new covenant (cf. 3:6) called by God, as he claims in another of his letters, to "proclaim [God's son] among the gentiles" (Gal 1:16). More specifically, however, Paul's hope focuses on the (gentile) Corinthians' acceptance of his gospel (cf. 2 Cor 5:20) for it is only by their acceptance of God's offer of reconciliation that they can be spared the deleterious effects of Moses' ministry of death and condemnation (cf. 3:7, 9). Of course, from Paul's point of view, accepting the deity's offer of reconciliation includes recognizing the integrity of God's διάκονος (Paul) and the legitimacy of his διακονία. Seen in this light, the hope that Paul mentions in 3:12 points back to his earlier statement that the Corinthians represent the apostle's letter of recommendation (3:2–3).

4 Cf. NRSV.

5 BAGF, s.v. 1.

6 For example, Euripides, in *Hippolytus* 420–23, has Phaedra say that she wants her sons to go back to Athens, "free with tongues unfettered" (ἐλεύθεροι παρρησίᾳ).

7 Stanley B. Marrow, "Parrhēsia and the New Testament," *CBQ* 44 (1982): 434–36. See also Abraham J. Malherbe, "'Gentle as a Nurse': The Cynic Background to 1 Thess ii," *NovT* 12 (1970): 208–16.

conforms to some extent to the usage of the philosophers for, as the apostle claims elsewhere, he has preached the gospel boldly and with little regard for the personal cost that he has paid.⁸

However, in 2 Cor 3:12, *παρρησία* carries another connotation. Since Paul juxtaposes his own *παρρησία* over against Moses' act of veiling his face, the term *παρρησία* here focuses on the apostle's "openness" rather than his boldness/freedom, what we might call his "transparency."⁹ Such a connotation for the term is attested elsewhere in the New Testament. For example, in the Gospel of John, after his arrest, Jesus tells the high priest, "I have spoken openly (*παρρησίᾳ*) in the world . . . I have said nothing in secret" (18:20). John's contrast between Jesus speaking with *παρρησία* versus speaking in secret corresponds closely to Paul's contrast between his own *παρρησία* and Moses' veiled face. But in the case of the juxtaposition between Paul and Moses in 3:12–13, it is not speech that is delivered either secretly or with *παρρησία* but action.¹⁰

Why does Paul make the claim for openness (*παρρησία*) in his actions here? Furthermore, why would he *contrast* himself with the lawgiver? It is, after all, the only true contrast that the apostle draws between himself and Moses throughout the whole section. I suggest that the allusion to Moses' act of veiling himself before the Israelites has a number of different functions. By means of it, Paul attempts to: 1) emphasize his innocence, specifically with regard to Corinthian suspicions about the collection; 2) highlight his integrity as an envoy of the deity; and 3) to shift the responsibility from himself to the Corinthians for any misunderstandings that may have arisen.

The first point is the most obvious. Since suspicions emerged in the community about Paul's honesty and integrity, his claim of openness here is meant to counter such. His actions, he claims, have all been above board. We see a similar kind of assertion at the end of the letter where the apostle declares that his openness before the community has been extensive (*πολλή μοι παρρησία πρὸς ὑμᾶς*, 7:4). Other claims for Paul's openness and integrity resound throughout 2:14–7:4 as we have already seen (e.g., his declaration in 4:2 that nothing that he has done before the community has been hidden [*ἀπειπάμεθα τὰ κρυπτὰ*

8 See, in particular, the hardship catalogue in 2 Cor 11:24 where Paul claims that, presumably as a result of his preaching, he has received 39 lashes from the Jews on five different occasions, he has been beaten with rods, and he has been stoned.

9 Cf. BAGD, s.v. 2.

10 Contra Oliveira who claims that Paul here addresses *both* speech and activity in his analysis of this passage (*Diakonie*, 192–94).

τῆς αἰσχύνης], nor has he exercised cunning [πανουργία] in his dealings with them).¹¹

Second, Paul's insistence on his παρρησία, particularly in contrast to Moses' actions, highlights his commission as an envoy (διάκονος) of God. His statement that he has been open and has hidden nothing touches upon one of the most fundamental requisites for any envoy in the ancient world. Due to the role of the διάκονος as an intermediary (i.e., one representing a party not physically present), openness and transparency were expected. The envoy was charged to transmit faithfully all that had been entrusted to him.¹² Consequently, according to Paul's interpretation of Exod 34:29–35, Moses' action had undermined his role as a divine envoy for he did not communicate everything to Israel that he had brought down from Mount Sinai. Some of it was held back by the veil.¹³ Paul, on the other hand, kept back nothing; he conveyed everything faithfully.

11 In a somewhat similar manner, in 6:6–7, he contends that his love for the Corinthians has not been hypocritical (ἀνυπόκριτος) and his words to them have been sincere (ἀληθεῖα).

12 Hence, in 2 Cor 5:20, Paul can appeal to the Corinthians, as an ambassador of Christ (ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ οὖν πρεσβεύομεν), that they be reconciled to the deity. The preposition ὑπὲρ here, in conjunction with the verb πρεσβεύω means that Paul, as envoy, carries the full authority of Christ (Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 339). It is worth noting that the verb πρεσβεύω as well as its corresponding substantive πρεσβευτής were both used in the Greek-speaking parts of the empire by official representatives of Caesar (Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1978], 374). For a good summary of an envoy's power and the consequent respect due an envoy, see Margaret M. Mitchell, "New Testament Envoys in the Context of Greco-Roman Diplomatic and Epistolary Conventions: The Examples of Timothy and Titus," *JBL* 111 (1992): 644–51.

13 An interesting question to be raised at this point is, how culpable was Moses for Israel's perceptual problems? On the surface, it would seem impossible to deny Moses' role in hindering Israel's perception because of the structure of 3:13 and, in particular, the clause πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀτενίσαι. This clause is almost universally treated as a phrase conveying purpose. In other words, it is usually interpreted to mean that Moses' purpose in veiling his face was to hide something from the Israelites' vision. It is possible, however, that the phrase πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀτενίσαι was not meant to convey intent but rather result. In other words, although obfuscation was not necessarily Moses' plan, it was the outcome. There are a few examples in the New Testament, specifically in the Gospel of Matthew, where we can see πρὸς with the infinitive used in this manner. In the Sermon on the Mount, for example, Jesus relates the famous phrase, "But I say to you that the one who looks at a woman with desire (πρὸς τὸ ἐπιθυμῆσαι αὐτήν) has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (5:28). According to this example, the subject looks at a beautiful woman not with the purpose of arousing lust. Rather, he looks at her in such a way that lust results (BAGD, "πρὸς," 111.6.b). A second example appears later in the gospel when Jesus is anointed by an unnamed woman at Bethany (26:6–13). After the woman is reproached by the disciples for wasting the costly ointment, Jesus defends her by telling his disciples,

Finally, the claim that Paul has not acted like Moses attempts to shift blame for any misperception on the part of the community away from the apostle. Paul points out here that Israel's inability to see everything that Moses brought down from his meeting with the deity was the fault of the lawgiver. To the contrary, Paul implies, if there is anything about him or his message that has been hidden or unclear to the Corinthians, it has *not* resulted from anything that he has done. We also see a similar assertion elsewhere in the letter, in 6:11–13, where Paul *explicitly* states that the fault for problems between the community and himself lay not with him but with the Corinthians:

We have spoken frankly (τὸ στόμα ἡμῶν ἀνέφωγεν) to you Corinthians, our heart is wide open (πεπλάτυνται) to you. There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours. In return—I speak as to children—open yourselves up to us (6:11–13).

In the first sentence of this passage, as in 3:12–13, Paul highlights his openness before the community. But, in the next sentence, he clearly blames the Corinthians for the tensions that exist between them. Although in 3:12–13 Paul does not explicitly lay the blame for any misunderstanding in the Corinthians, nevertheless, the implication is there.¹⁴

Paul's insistence on his *παρρησία* and his implicit shift in blame for any misperception in 3:12–13a opens the way for the introduction of Israel (3:13b) who, like the Corinthians, also misunderstood the *διάκονος* before them. But in 3:13, Paul lays the blame not on Israel but on Moses. What was it that the lawgiver hid from the Israelites of the wilderness generation? According to the end of the verse, when he came down from Sinai, Moses prevented the Israelites from seeing τὸ τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου. Unfortunately, the precise meaning of the phrase τὸ τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου is obfuscated by two significant exegetical issues. The first concerns the ambiguity of the term *τέλος* and the second, that to which τοῦ καταργουμένου specifically refers. We will begin by examining the latter.

"By pouring this ointment on my body she has prepared me for burial (πρὸς τὸ ἐνταφιάσαι με ἐποίησεν)." Clearly, the *πρὸς τό* phrase here does not function to convey purpose. The woman's intent was not to anoint him for burial but simply to honor him. However, the result, as interpreted by Jesus, was to foreshadow his death (Otfried Hofius, "Gesetz und Evangelium Nach 2. Korinther 3," in his *Paulusstudien* [Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1989], 104–5). However, although this interpretation is possible, it seems somewhat forced.

14 There is one more passage that bears some resemblance to 3:12–13. It appears in 4:3–4 and we will examine it below.

The verb καταργέω appears four times in 2 Corinthians 3: in 3:7, 11, 13 (the verse under discussion), and 14. In three of its four appearances (in vv. 7, 11, and the passage under discussion), the verb appears in the form of a participle. Consequently, the meaning that it bears in 3:7 and 11 is most relevant for our understanding of τοῦ καταργουμένου in 3:13.¹⁵ Since, in the two earlier verses (3:7 and 11), the participle refers in some way to the ministry (διακονία) of Moses, it would seem likely that it should also point in the same direction in the verse currently under discussion (3:13).¹⁶ But to what specifically about Moses' διακονία does Paul refer?

The answer provided by Furnish is representative of the opinions of many scholars: "in Christ the ministry of the Law is nullified as the way to salvation."¹⁷ Unfortunately, as we have already seen, such an interpretation is difficult to justify in the context of Paul's apology. The claim that, "in Christ, the ministry of the Law is nullified as the way to salvation" would seem, at best, peripheral to Paul's argument. A look back at our understanding of the way that Paul employs the participial form of καταργέω in 3:7 will help to point us in a better direction.

In 3:7, καταργουμένη modifies the term δόξα. As was argued in the previous chapter, the latter term in 3:7 refers to the avenging δόξα of the lawgiver's διακονία of death (i.e., the condemnatory effect that Moses' ministry had on the gentiles). By attaching καταργουμένη to δόξα there, Paul indicates that the διακονία τοῦ θανάτου/διακονία τῆς κατακρίσεως has been rendered powerless. Paul's point in 3:11 is similar.¹⁸ We can consequently conclude that καταργούμενον in 3:13 should be understood in a similar way. As in the earlier verses, the participial form of the verb καταργέω functions in 3:13 as the apostle's shorthand for the powerlessness of Moses' ministry of death and condemnation over the gentiles (i.e., those gentiles who have accepted the deity's offer of reconciliation, cf. 5:18–20).

15 The finite verb appears in 3:14c, a particularly problematic phrase. We will consider it below.

16 For τὸ καταργουμένου as focused on Moses' ministry in 3:7 and 11, see Windisch, *Zweite Korintherbrief*, 117; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 205; and Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 252.

17 Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 234; cf. Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 257.

18 However, in 3:11, the participle cannot refer specifically to Moses' δόξα, as was the case in 3:7, because καταργούμενον appears in 3:11 in a neuter form. It must therefore be interpreted more generally (e.g., Windisch, *Zweite Korintherbrief*, 117; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 205; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 252). Paul here means therefore that Moses' ministry *as it relates to the gentiles* (i.e., as a ministry of death and condemnation for them) has been annulled.

The second exegetical issue in 3:13b centers on the ambiguity of the term τέλος. While the word τέλος can mean “end” in the exclusively temporal sense (i.e., “termination” or “cessation”), it can also signify “end” in the sense of “goal” or “purpose.” While most modern interpreters have opted for the former meaning here,¹⁹ a few have understood τέλος in the latter sense.²⁰ Since Paul uses the term in both ways in his letters, its meaning in 3:13 can only be determined by context.²¹ Therefore, we need to ask if Paul is here making the claim that Moses hid his face so that Israel could not see “the end (in the sense of cessation) of what was in the process of being rendered powerless,” that is to say, the conclusion of the temporary negative effects of the Mosaic ministry on the gentiles? Or did Paul mean that Moses covered his face so that Israel could not perceive “the end (in the sense of goal) of what was in the process of being rendered powerless” (i.e., the goal of the temporary negative effects of the Mosaic ministry on the gentiles)? As we understand the context of 2 Cor 3:12–13, the better answer would be the former. That is to say, Moses’ veil prevented Israel from viewing the cessation of the condemnation of the gentiles, the condemnation that was in the process of being rendered powerless.

In light of this understanding of the meaning of τέλος, it should be noted that this term’s conjunction with καταργούμενον in this phrase creates a pleonasm that renders the phrase τὸ τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου particularly difficult to translate. Why would Paul employ such redundancy here? While it has been suggested that the pleonasm was intended to emphasize the offense of Moses, that seems unlikely, particularly in light of the fact that, apart from this verse, the lawgiver is not depicted negatively in this portion of 2:14–7:4.²² It is much more likely that the pleonasm was created instead to highlight the point that the deleterious effects of Moses’ ministry on the gentiles have come to an end.

By focusing on the inability of the wilderness generation to see τὸ τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου in 3:13b, Paul provides a transition to the next set of verses,

19 Among others, see Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 97; Windisch, *Zweite Korintherbrief*, 120; Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 119–20; Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 85; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 207; Collange, *Énigmes*, 85; Oliveira, *Diakonie*, 78; Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 52.

20 This latter meaning was also favored by a number of ancient commentators, including Augustine and Theodoret. For a discussion of the ancient authors’ opinions, see Hays, *Echoes*, 136. For modern scholars who support this option, see, among others, Héring, *Second Epistle*, 25; Rissi, *Studien*, 32–33; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 68; Hays, *Echoes*, 136–38; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 256–58; Barnett, *Second Epistle*, 190, n. 6.

21 According to Thrall, we can be sure of Paul’s use of the term to refer to the temporal cessation only in 1 Cor 1:8; 10:11; 15:24 (*Second Epistle*, 257).

22 For the idea that the pleonasm functions to emphasize the offense of Moses, see Oliveira, *Diakonie*, 79.

verses that focus on the Jews of Paul's time (3:14–15). By making the claim that Moses kept something back from the wilderness generation, Paul suggests that the relationship between those two entities provides a parallel to the situation of his Jewish contemporaries. In each case, only Moses possessed the complete truth. In the wilderness, Moses (the person) had received it directly from the deity. In Paul's own time, the apostle contends that the truth still resides in Moses (the text). However, in both cases, the truth is inaccessible to Israel. The veil of Moses blocked it from the wilderness generation and the same veil remains over Moses (the text) "to this very day."

But, Paul's focus on *Israel's* perceptual difficulties in 3:13b (due, of course, to Moses' interference) is also puzzling. If Paul's apologetic argument is directed at the *gentiles* of Corinth, why would he think it important to affirm that Moses prevented *Israel* from seeing τὸ τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου? The explicit contrast drawn by the apostle between himself and Moses in 3:12–13—his openness and Moses' lack thereof—suggests an answer: Paul meant to implicitly juxtapose Israel and the Corinthians. With his assertion that he has acted "not like Moses," Paul in effect asks the Corinthians: "Have you acted like Israel? Have you been as blind to my message as Israel was to that of Moses?"²³ We will speak to this further in the next section.

"Moses" (the Text) and Israel: 2 Cor 3:14–15

Curiously in 3:14, despite the readers' expectations, nothing more is said about the contrast between Paul and Moses. Instead, the lawgiver suddenly seems to vanish and Israel takes center stage. Moses is not named again until the following verse (3:15) and there it is Moses the text rather than the prophet of old that the reader encounters. A close look at 3:14, however, demonstrates that Moses is in fact still present in that verse, although in the background and not named as such. Rather, Moses (the text) is here re-labeled the "old covenant" (ἡ παλαιὰ διαθήκη).²⁴

23 The Corinthians might have turned the example back on Paul (i.e., "we, like Israel, did not see everything because you, like Moses, hid it") if Paul had not previously precluded that possibility by contrasting his actions with those of Moses.

24 The similarities between 3:14b and 3:15 make this identification indisputable. Both begin with a similar temporal clause, both mention the veil, and both indicate that the veil interferes with reading (of the old covenant in 3:14b and Moses in 3:15). See also Windisch, *Zweite Korintherbrief*, 121. For further discussion of ἡ παλαιὰ διαθήκη, see Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 263, n. 511.

But despite the fact that 3:14b–15 refers to Moses, not as the person from Israel's past but as a text, these verses nevertheless still allude to Moses' veil, mentioned in the narrative of 3:13. In the later verses (3:14b–15), however, the placement of the veil has shifted. It no longer stands between the prophet and the Israelites of the wilderness generation. Instead, it now constitutes an impediment between the scriptural text (Moses) and the Jews of Paul's time.²⁵

Israel and Her Clouded Thinking

While it is obvious that Paul's portrayal of Israel is negative in 3:14–15, it is not clear how culpable Paul thinks that she is for her failure. In the verse immediately preceding, 3:13, Israel appears to be innocent of any wrongdoing and Moses seems to be the party at fault: *he* covered his face with a veil, “to keep the Israelites from gazing at τὸ τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου.” But the picture seems to change in the very next statement (in 3:14a), where the apostle makes a rather puzzling claim about the Israelite: ἀλλὰ ἐπωρώθη τὰ νοήματα αὐτῶν (“but their thinking was clouded”).²⁶ The passive verb in 3:14a, ἐπωρώθη, casts doubt on the responsibility of Moses for Israel's perceptual difficulty, something that had seemed obvious in the previous verse (3:13). But before we examine ἐπωρώθη, it is necessary to investigate the way that Paul opens the sentence.

The short sentence in 3:14a begins with the term, ἀλλὰ (usually translated “but”). How are we to understand it? Unless Paul had meant to take his argument in a different direction here, it would have made more sense for him to begin this particular sentence with a different term, with, for example, something like διό (“therefore”), ὥστε (“consequently,” “so that,” “therefore”), ἵνα (“so that”), or even καί (“and”). But, since he employs ἀλλὰ here rather than any of

25 That Paul is concerned with the Jews of his own time is made evident by the phrases ἄρχι γὰρ τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας in 3:14b and ἕως σήμερον in 3:15.

26 The verb πωρώ is rare in Jewish and early Christian literature. In Paul's writings, the verb πωρώ only appears here and Rom 11:7 (although the noun πώρωσις appears in Rom 11:25). The verb is used in Job 17:7 to describe the impairment of vision due to grief. Mark Nanos has recently suggested that the verb does not mean to harden per se but to thicken (in the sense of forming a callous). As a result, in the Pauline context—i.e., in connection with the thinking process (τὰ νοήματα)—it indicates some kind of interference. For further discussion of the verb, see Mark D. Nanos, “‘Calloused,’ Not ‘Hardened’: Paul's Revelation of Temporary Protection Until All Israel Can Be Healed,” in *Reading Paul in Context: Explorations in Identity Formation. Essays in Honour of William S. Campbell*, ed. Kathy Ehrensperger and J. Brian Tucker (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 52–73. For τὰ νοήματα as the thinking process rather than the mind itself, see, Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 207. In light of the meaning of these two terms (πωρώ and νοήματα), I have rendered the phrase, “their thinking was clouded” rather than “their minds were hardened” as in the NRSV.

the above choices, most scholars have understood that term as conveying true adversative force. In other words, they have interpreted the initial phrase of 3:14 (ἀλλὰ ἐπωρώθη τὰ νοήματα αὐτῶν) as providing some kind of correction of 3:13. But, what could Paul have been correcting?

Some claim that 3:14a was intended by Paul to remove at least some of the blame from Moses and put it on to Israel. Note, for example, Barrett's comment:

Moses acted as he did not with a view to concealing the truth but in order to persuade the children of Israel to accept it. . . . *But*—his well-meant attempt failed. . . . The power of the beholders to perceive was diminished. The Old Testament, though less clear than the New, was a genuine revelation of God; the hearers themselves . . . contribute to the failure to achieve its goal.²⁷

According to the final sentence quoted above, Israel herself was to some extent blameworthy for her perceptual failure. Furnish provides a similar explanation. His claim, however, is unambiguous regarding the culpability of the Israelites. They were totally at fault: "not Moses, but the Israelites were responsible for their unbelief."²⁸

Nevertheless, there is no clear textual evidence to support the suggestion that Israel was in some way to blame for her inability to perceive τὸ τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου. As a result, we should look for another way to understand the text. Indeed, in the sentence under discussion, the presence of the verb πωρώω in its passive form argues against the possibility that Paul intended to shift the blame onto Israel. Rather, the context suggests that ἐπωρώθη should be understood as a divine passive (*passivum divinum*).²⁹ Paul seems to be saying that the deity, rather than Israel herself, bears responsibility for Israel's perceptual failings.³⁰

Probably the most convincing reason for interpreting ἐπωρώθη as a divine passive lies with Paul's use of the same term in Rom 11:7. In that text—a passage in which the remnant of Israel is discussed—Paul asserts that,

27 Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 120. Emphasis in the original.

28 Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 233.

29 See also Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 262; and Harris, *Second Epistle*, 301. Kuschnerus makes the same suggestion although hesitantly (*Kuschnerus, Gemeinde*, 192).

30 Cf. Barnett who argues that Israel and God share the responsibility (*Second Epistle*, 193, n. 19).

Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it but the rest were ἐπωρώθησαν (“made obtuse”).³¹

Here Paul makes the claim that the majority of Israelites (i.e., all but the elect) were made obtuse (ἐπωρώθησαν). Since Rom 11:7 and 2 Cor 3:14 are the only two places in the whole of the Pauline corpus where we encounter the verb πωρώω, it seems reasonable to interpret the one in terms of the other.³² But can we be sure that the verb in Rom 11:7 functions as a *passivum divinum*? Proof comes in the verse that immediately follows. There Paul appeals to scripture to demonstrate that Israel’s impairment was not her own doing but that of the deity:³³

God gave them a sluggish spirit
eyes that would not see
and ears that would not hear,
down to this very day (11:8).

Paul’s claim that God was responsible for Israel’s perceptual problem in Rom 11:7–8 (“eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear”) argues that the same should be true for 2 Cor 3:14a.³⁴

But if Paul meant to indicate that God was responsible for clouding Israel’s thinking in 2 Cor 3:14a, how are we then to resolve the seeming tension between 3:13 and 3:14a? In the earlier verse, Moses is the culprit, in the later, God is responsible. Who is ultimately responsible for Israel’s inability to perceive correctly? If we look closely at the actions of Israel in 3:13 and also in 3:14b and 15, the answer comes into focus. According to 3:13:

31 Although “made obtuse” is hardly an elegant translation of ἐπωρώθησαν, nevertheless it comes closer to the meaning than “hardened.” See J. Armitage Robinson, *Commentary on Ephesians: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indexes* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel, 1979), 265–66.

32 The verb also appears three times in the gospels Mark 6:52; 8:17; and John 12:40. It is not found elsewhere in the New Testament.

33 The proof actually represents a combination of Isa 29:10 (the first line) and Deut 29:3.

34 While there are obviously differences between 2 Cor 3:14a and Rom 11:7–8, there is a telling similarity (besides their sharing the unusual verb πωρώω). The phrase ἕως τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας (“down to this very day”) in Rom 11:8 is nearly identical to the opening phrase of 3:14b, ἄρχι γὰρ τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας (“to this very day”). This parallel alongside the use of the same rare verb strongly suggests that Paul was thinking in similar ways when he penned each text.

[Moses] put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing (ἀτενίσαι) at the end of what was being set aside.

Paul here uses the verb ἀτενίζω, the same verb that he had earlier used in 3:7 (also in reference to Israel's inability to look at Moses' face).³⁵ The term ἀτενίζω, meaning "to fix one's eyes upon," or "to look intently at," has to do with seeing, more specifically, with the actions of the eyes.³⁶ Consequently, the plain meaning of the text is as follows: the Israelites could not *look at* Moses' face because the lawgiver put an obstacle (the veil) between their eyes and the object of their vision. The next sentence, 3:14a, presents us with something different. There the sentence is not about the physical act of *seeing* but rather it focuses on the cognitive process, on *thinking*. That which is obstructed in 3:14a is not Israel's vision per se, but her νοήματα ("thoughts").³⁷

The seeming tension between 3:13b and 3:14a thereby diminishes significantly. Instead of understanding 3:14a as a correction of 3:13b, it would be more accurate to view it as a supplement. The opening ἀλλά should then be understood in a progressive rather than adversative sense, perhaps best translated something like "furthermore." In light of this, a simplified paraphrase of 3:13b–14a would read something like: "Moses put a veil over his face so that the Israelites could not *set their eyes on* that which was on his face (i.e., τὸ τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου). God furthermore clouded their *thinking* (3:13–14a)."³⁸

The sentence in 3:14a (ἀλλά ἐπωρώθη τὰ νοήματα αὐτῶν) then can be understood as a transition between 3:13b, where Moses (the person) uses a veil to obstruct the *seeing* of the Israelites of his time and 3:14b–15, where Paul claims that the Jews of his time wrongly *interpret* Moses (the text) because of the same veil:

35 In 3:7, however, it was δόξα rather than the veil that prevented Israel from seeing Moses' face.

36 The direct connection between this term and the eyes appears in Luke's narration of Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16–30). Following his reading of the scroll of Isaiah, "[Jesus] rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all (πάντων οἱ ὀφθαλμοί) in the synagogue were fixed on him (ἀτενίζοντες αὐτῷ, 4:20)." It should be noted that the verb can be used metaphorically with regard to the mind (LSJ, s.v.) but we do not encounter such a usage in the New Testament.

37 While the term νοήματα can mean "minds," here it more likely refers to the thinking process itself. See especially 2 Cor 2:11, where the νοήματα of Satan refers to his scheming.

38 For ἀλλά in a progressive sense, see Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 263. Bultmann notes that ἀλλά is used in a similar way in 1 Cor 3:2 and Phil 1:18 (*Second Letter*, 86).

¹⁴ ... Indeed, to this very day, when [Israel hears] the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there ... ¹⁵ Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts.

In these two phrases, Paul clearly did not intend to convey the idea that the veil prevented the Jews of his time from *seeing* the scriptural text. Obviously they could. What they could not do, according to Paul, was correctly *understand* it. Here, the apostle connects the ineffective reading of scripture by his Jewish contemporaries with God's clouding of Israel's minds in 3:14a.³⁹ The text suggests that the deity impeded the thinking of the wilderness generation following Moses' act of preventing them from seeing τὸ τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου. That handicap, Paul suggests, subsequently afflicted Israel not only then but also in every generation that followed, up until Paul's time. What, from Paul's perspective, was wrong with his fellow Jews' interpretation of Moses (i.e., the Torah)? That which stands between the two parallel sentences of 3:14b and 3:15 addresses that question.

With the phrase μὴ ἀνακαλυπτόμενον ὅτι ἐν Χριστῷ καταργεῖται ("[the veil is] unlifted because [it is] in Christ that it is abolished"), Paul points to the specific reason that the reading of his Jewish contemporaries is inaccurate.⁴⁰ It is incorrect, he claims, because the only way to read Moses in an unveiled manner is to read the text "in Christ," that is, within the context of the assembly (ἐκκλησία) of believers.⁴¹ In other words, the only way to read the text unveiled is to read it

39 Although 3:15 mentions that the veil lies over the καρδίαι of the Israelites, it should be remembered that the heart was considered the organ in which thinking took place. See, for example, Paul's comment in 2 Cor 9:7: ἕκαστος καθὼς προήρηται τῇ καρδίᾳ, correctly translated by the NRSV as: "Each of you ... as you have made up your mind."

40 The translation is from Thrall. It is to be noted that various exegetical questions are raised by this verse. The most important are: 1) What is the role played by the participial phrase, μὴ ἀνακαλυπτόμενον? Is it the predicate of μένει? Is it an accusative absolute? Does it stand independently? 2) What is the function of ὅτι? Is it a relative pronoun pointing to τὸ κάλυμμα? Is it declarative, meaning "that?" Or is it causal, meaning "because?" 3) What is the subject of καταργεῖται? Is it τὸ αὐτὸ κάλυμμα? Or is it something else, like the "old covenant?" Because of these various options, there are at least five different translations of this phrase (as rendered by Thrall): 1) "The same veil ... remains unlifted, (the veil) which is abolished in Christ;" 2) "The same veil ... remains; it is not revealed that it (i.e., the old covenant) is abolished in Christ;" 3) "The same veil ... remains unlifted, because (it is) in Christ (that) it is abolished;" and 4) "The same veil ... remains; unlifted because (it is) in Christ (that) it (i.e., the veil) is abolished." For a comprehensive discussion of the various options, see her *Second Epistle*, 263–66.

41 It is also possible to understand ἐν Χριστῷ instrumentally, that is to say, "through Christ." This possibility, however, seems less likely.

through the eschatological lens of the ἐκκλησία, that is, in light of the death and resurrection of Jesus.⁴² Since the majority of the Jews of Paul's time were not ἐν Χριστῷ, the apostle insists that they did not have this capability.⁴³

On the surface, Paul's focus on Israel here seems curious. It differs from what we see, for example, in Romans 9–11. In 2 Corinthians 3, the apostle does not seem particularly interested in the problem of Jewish unbelief in Jesus as the Messiah as he does in the Romans text. Indeed, given the nature of Paul's apologetic endeavor in 2:14–7:4, there would be no reason for him to focus his argument here in such a direction. Rather, as suggested above, he more likely points to Israel in order to compare and/or contrast her actions with those of his Corinthian readers. There is, in fact, a precedence for such a strategy that we see in an earlier letter written to the Corinthians.

In 1 Corinthians 8–10, in the midst of his discussion of εἰδωλόθυτα ("food sacrificed to idols"), Paul brings Israel into his argument. While warning that the eating of εἰδωλόθυτα posed the danger of leading some Corinthians into idolatry, the apostle narrates part of Israel's journey in the wilderness following her escape from Egypt:

10:1 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea,² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,³ and all ate the same spiritual food,⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.⁵ Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.

Paul's reference to baptism and his allusions to the Lord's supper in this passage suggest his motivation for bringing Israel into his argument in 1 Corinthians. Furthermore, he explicitly states his rationale in the verse that follows the passage quoted above, where he asserts: "Now these things are examples (τύποι)

42 See the comments of Hays concerning Paul's use of scripture above (chapter 4).

43 What is remarkable about the two parallel phrases in 3:14b and 15 is that Moses (the text) is in no way impugned here. While, according to Paul's narration of Exod 34:29–35, some fault could be found with the *person* of Moses (3:13), no such fault is attributed to Moses the *text*. Although the interpretive powers of Paul's Jewish contemporaries are maligned by the apostle, Moses, read properly, stands beyond reproach. Paul's view of the validity of "Moses" (the text) is confirmed elsewhere in his letters. For example, scripture (i.e., Moses) attests to the significance of Christ's suffering and death (e.g., 1 Cor 15:3–4), it foretells the inclusion of the gentiles (e.g., Gal 4:21–31; Rom 10:19–21), and it provides models for proper behavior (1 Cor 10:1–11) to name just a few examples.

for us, so that we might not desire evil as [the Israelites] did" (10:6). Obviously, Paul's primary concern in 1 Corinthians 10 was not Israel or her behavior. Rather, his interest lay with the actions of the Corinthian community. I suggest that Israel's role in 2 Cor 3:13b–15 is comparable to the role that she plays in 1 Corinthians 10.⁴⁴

Implied by Paul's use of Israel in 2 Cor 3:13b–15 is the notion that the Corinthians' perception of him (as a charlatan) is incorrect. In other words, by employing Israel here, Paul intimates that just as Israel's perception of Moses was and continues to be inaccurate, so too the Corinthian perception of him is fallacious. But is there evidence in the text to support the idea that Paul is drawing a connection between Israel and the Corinthians? After all, in 1 Corinthians 10, Paul makes his intent clear, particularly in 10:6 where he tells his readers that Israel's actions were intended as an example (10:6). No such claim appears in 2 Corinthians 3. Nevertheless, we can see other support for the idea that the apostle is using Israel as an example in 2 Corinthians 3 and we can see it in several places.

First, since Paul employs Moses in order to talk about his own actions in 3:12–13a, it follows that he would expect his readers to view their perception of him in relation to Israel's perception of the lawgiver in 3:13b–15. Second, in the last verse of the chapter, Paul makes the claim that the Corinthians have "unveiled faces" (3:18). It seems certain that this remark about the Corinthians' status (*vis-à-vis* a veil) was intended to evoke that of veiled Israel, depicted a few verses earlier. A third place where we see support for the idea that Paul intended his readers to see their behavior in relation to that of Israel comes from a few verses that shortly follow the section under discussion, 4:3–4. We will now turn to those verses and then we will return to the comparison of the Corinthians and Israel.

"Those Who Are Perishing": 2 Cor 4:3–4

In 2 Cor 4:3–4, two verses that occupy the center of the section that immediately follows 3:12–18, Paul turns his attention to οἱ ἀπολλύμενοι ("those who are perishing"), a group that he had mentioned at the beginning of the letter (2:15–16). Although Israel is not the subject of 4:3–4, a connection nevertheless exists between Israel and οἱ ἀπολλύμενοι. But before we address that connection, it is necessary to examine 4:3–4 in some detail.

44 Of course, there are also differences between the passages. Perhaps the most significant is Israel's culpability for her own fate in 1 Corinthians (cf. 10:5) while in 2 Cor 3:13b–15 (as we have already seen), Israel seems innocent of wrongdoing. We will return to this point below in our discussion of 2 Cor 4:3–4.

Thematically, both verses connect Paul's gospel, the object of perception, with the perceiver's status before the deity. The first of the verses, 2 Cor 4:3, takes the form of a conditional sentence and states:

And even if our gospel (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν) is hidden (κεκαλυμμένον), it is hidden (κεκαλυμμένον) from those who are perishing (ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις).

There are a number of interesting questions that this conditional sentence raises. First, in the protasis, we find the mention of *Paul's* gospel (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν). The reference to the gospel here as *his* gospel is puzzling. Why does he refer to it as *his* gospel?⁴⁵ Also puzzling is Paul's description of his gospel as "hidden," a description first given in the protasis but repeated in the apodosis. Why would Paul speak about his gospel as hidden and why would he emphasize its hiddenness (by mentioning it twice in the same sentence)? Finally, in the apodosis of the sentence, we are confronted with yet another question: Who does Paul label οἱ ἀπολλύμενοι ("those who are perishing") here?

The first question concerns Paul's description of the gospel as *his* gospel. What exactly does he mean? One might initially suspect that Paul simply refers to the oral proclamation that *he* had delivered to the Corinthians upon his initial arrival in Corinth (as opposed to the oral proclamation made by someone else, like Apollos, for example).⁴⁶ The larger context of the letter, however, suggests something else. It suggests that by "*his* gospel," Paul means something more comprehensive than simply the oral message delivered by him to the community. As we have already seen, early on in the letter, Paul had asserted that he himself was the "fragrance of Christ in God's service" (Χριστοῦ εὐωδία ἐσμεν τῷ θεῷ, 2:15). This metaphorical statement suggests that the gospel for Paul was not merely an oral proclamation but rather it was to something larger. A passage from later in the letter both confirms this interpretation and, at the same time, clarifies Paul's meaning. In 4:10–11, Paul asserts:

[We are] always carrying in our bodies the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh (4:10–11).

45 This is a particularly interesting question in light of Paul's claim in Gal 1:6 that there is no other gospel. Of course, many have suggested that Paul refers to *his* gospel here in opposition to the gospel preached by his opponents (cf. 11:4). See, for example, Georgi, *Opponents*, 260–61.

46 When Paul uses the term εὐαγγέλιον in connection with his own activity, this seems to be his normal meaning (Gal 1:11; 2:2, 7; 1 Cor 9:14, 18; 15:1).

Here Paul expresses the notion that his physical suffering in some way “proclaims” the dying of Jesus. This claim and Paul’s insistence that the “life of Jesus” is “made visible in his mortal flesh” are each clarified by the verses that come immediately before:

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed;
perplexed, but not driven to despair;
persecuted, but not forsaken;
struck down, but not destroyed (4:8–9).

These four antithetical statements indicate that Paul’s suffering (including his mental anguish) has not ultimately resulted in his demise. Rather, as he says in 4:10–11, they function to display to others the “dying of Jesus.” His survival of the various and sundry trials in turn represent to potential converts the “life of Jesus.” This, I suggest, is what Paul means in 4:3 by “his gospel.” This conclusion, in turn, answers the next question raised by 4:3. When Paul suggests the possibility that his gospel is hidden (κεκαλυμμένον) from some in that same verse, we should interpret that to mean not that his words were unintelligible but rather that his unimpressive physical presence and, in particular, his suffering, has been misinterpreted.

Those who have misinterpreted these things are the ἀπολλύμενοι mentioned in the apodosis of 4:3. But exactly to whom is Paul pointing here? Not surprisingly, many have claimed that Paul uses this label to refer to his apostolic rivals.⁴⁷ Others have suggested that οἱ ἀπολλύμενοι stands for the Jews from the neighboring Corinthian synagogue.⁴⁸ But, for reasons already argued, neither of these suggestions are convincing. To whom, then, does the label refer? A clue comes from the beginning of the letter, in 2:15, where οἱ ἀπολλύμενοι are set against οἱ σωζόμενοι (“those who are being saved”). Based upon the opposition presented in 2:15, it seems reasonable to infer that οἱ σωζόμενοι represent those in the community who have correctly perceived Paul’s suffering and survival as the display of the dying and rising of Christ in his body. The ἀπολλύμενοι, to the contrary, must then represent Paul’s detractors in Corinth—those who view his suffering as God’s judgment on the apostle.

In the verse that follows (4:4), Paul more fully explains the predicament of his Corinthian critics:

47 E.g., Lietzmann, *Korinther 1–II*, 115; Collange, *Enigmes*, 134; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 247; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 78.

48 Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 305; Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 65.

The god of this age (ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου) has blinded the thinking of the unbelievers (ἐτύφλωσεν τὰ νοήματα τῶν ἀπίστων) so that they cannot see the light (φωτισμόν) of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.⁴⁹

Here, there appear a number of new elements, including: 1) the identification of οἱ ἀπολλύμενοι as οἱ ἄπιστοι (“unbelievers”), 2) the unusual reference to the blinding of the unbelievers’ thinking, and 3) the identification of the agent responsible for the incomprehension of the unbelievers, “the god of this age.”

The first of these elements—the description of οἱ ἀπολλύμενοι as οἱ ἄπιστοι—presents us with the surprising identification of “those who are perishing” with “unbelievers.” One would expect Paul to reserve the label “unbelievers” for those *outside* the community, something we see elsewhere in his letters (e.g., 1 Cor 6:6; 7:12–16; 10:24; and 14:22–25).⁵⁰ Nevertheless, in the context of Paul’s apology, it makes better sense to understand this label as pointing to his detractors within the community; there would be little reason for him to focus on the unconverted here.⁵¹ Paul’s use of the label ἄπιστοι for his critics therefore functions to describe his detractors as standing beyond the bounds of the ἐκκλησία.⁵² Unlike his supporters (οἱ σωζόμενοι, 2:15), the apostle contends that his detractors have not been reconciled to God. They are, in effect, ἄπιστοι and, as such, they are perishing (ἀπολλύμενοι).

The second new element in 4:4 is the reference to the blinding of the unbelievers’ thinking (ἐτύφλωσεν τὰ νοήματα τῶν ἀπίστων).⁵³ This phrase is also surprising for one would normally expect a reference to the blinding of one’s

49 Strictly speaking, since the verse begins with ἐν οἷς, we should expect οἱ ἄπιστοι to be a subset of οἱ ἀπολλύμενοι. But for Paul, the two groups seem to be identical. Consequently, following Furnish, I have not included ἐν οἷς in the translation (*11 Corinthians*, 220).

50 Cf. Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 305.

51 It should also be noted (assuming the identification of the “god of this age” with Satan—to be discussed below) that Paul consistently ties the actions of Satan to insiders, that is, to members of the ἐκκλησία, rather than outsiders. See 1 Cor 5:5; 7:5; 2 Cor 2:11; 11:14–15.

52 Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 108.

53 Although new here, Paul’s idea of the blinding of the mind is by no means unprecedented. The metaphor appears in other literature of his time. For example, Philo, in his work *De ebrietate* (108), speaks of the thoughtless person whose intellect is blinded (ὁ δὲ ἀπερίσκεπτος διάνοιαν τυφλωθείς). Likewise Josephus, in his narrative about Solomon’s solution to the problem of two women claiming the same child (*Antiquitates judaicae* 8.30), insists that none of the king’s contemporaries were able to resolve the dispute because all their minds were blinded (πάντων τῇ διανοίᾳ τετυφλωμένων).

eyes rather than one's thinking.⁵⁴ The apostle's reference to the blinding of his detractors' *thinking* (τὰ νοήματα) nevertheless makes sense in the larger context of his argument; it calls to mind the earlier sentence focused on the Israelites in 3:14a. We will return to this idea shortly but, before we do so, we will turn to the third new element introduced in 4:4: "the god of this age."

The label "the god of this age" is unique to this particular passage.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, this designation appears to be related to the phrase οἱ ἄρχοντες τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου ("the rulers of this age") in 1 Cor 2:6. In that earlier passage, "the rulers" most likely describe demonic beings rather than human rulers.⁵⁶ Understood in relation to that earlier passage, "the god of this age" would therefore point to Satan and "the rulers of this age" (1 Cor 2:6) would refer to his minions.⁵⁷ The similarity between ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου and οἱ ἄρχοντες τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου in the earlier letter may explain why Paul opts for the former designation rather than the more usual ὁ σατανᾶς in 2 Cor 4:4.⁵⁸

Israel and "Those Who Are Perishing": 2 Cor 3:14–15 and 4:3–4

We can now turn to the connection between the verses currently under discussion (4:3–4) and Israel in the early verses of 3:12–18. There are three major points of connection between Paul's detractors as they are depicted in 4:3–4 and Israel as she is described in 3:13–15. These are: 1) the notion of something being veiled; 2) the obstruction of both groups' νοήματα; and 3) the inability of each group to correctly perceive the δόξα of its respective envoy's διακονία.

54 For example, 1 John 2:11 claims that the person who hates, "walks in darkness, and does not know the way to go, because the darkness ἐτύφλωσεν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ ("blinded his eyes").

55 Two interesting passages that resemble the phrase ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου ἐτύφλωσεν τὰ νοήματα τῶν ἀπίστων appear in the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*. In *T. Jud.*, Judah claims that: ἐτύφλωσεν γὰρ με ὁ ἄρχων τῆς πλάνης (19:4) and in *T. Sim.*, Simeon states that ὁ ἄρχων τῆς πλάνης ἐτύφλωσε μου τὸν νοῦν (2:7).

56 Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 103.

57 Cf. Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 61.

58 Paul refers to ὁ σατανᾶς in Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 5:5; 7:5; 2 Cor 2:11; 11:14; 12:7; and 1 Thess 2:18. It is perhaps significant that, in 1 Cor 2:6, Paul ties "the rulers of this age" to wisdom belonging to this world (ἡ σοφία τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου). In the context of the later apology in 2 Cor 2:14–7:4, Paul would associate such wisdom with the thinking of his detractors, whose minds had been blinded by Satan. For them, Paul's gospel (as it was displayed in his body) would be hidden or "veiled" (κεκαλυμμένον).

The first point is the connection of each group with a veil. Obviously, as we have seen, the veil of Moses plays an important role in 3:13–15. In the wilderness, Israel’s perception was obstructed by Moses’ veil and the “same veil” also lay over Paul’s contemporaries’ reading of Moses. The apostle also associates a veil with his critics in 4:3 for there he describes his gospel as hidden from them with the term *κεκαλυμμένον* (from the verb *καλύπτω*). Since this term appears only here in Paul’s writings—we may safely conclude that the apostle’s employment of it in 4:3 is significant.⁵⁹ Given the relationship of *κεκαλυμμένον* to the noun *κάλυμμα*, we can reasonably assume that Paul employed *κεκαλυμμένον* here so his readers would tie this verse back to 3:12–18.⁶⁰ When 4:3–4 is viewed against the background of those earlier verses, Paul’s point clearly emerges: those for whom his gospel is hidden (*κεκαλυμμένον*) are like veiled Israel.⁶¹

The second intersection between Paul’s description of his detractors and his depiction of Israel focuses on the obstruction of each group’s cognition. It is significant that these are the only two places in Paul’s writings where the apostle describes problems associated with a particular group’s *νοήματα*. When the relevant phrases are set beside one another, the resemblance between Israel (3:14a) and Paul’s detractors (*οἱ ἀπολλύμενοι*) is clear:

ἀλλὰ ἐπωρώθη τὰ νοήματα αὐτῶν (Israel in 3:14a)
ἐτύφλωσεν τὰ νοήματα τῶν ἀπίστων (Paul’s detractors in 4:4)

Each group has had its thinking process compromised. But, despite the similarities between the obstructed *νοήματα* of Paul’s detractors and Israel, the differences should not be overlooked. The thinking of Israel was merely hindered; the obstruction, it seems, was only partial. Israel could still read Moses, although her reading was inaccurate.⁶² But the thinking of Paul’s detractors (i.e., the unbelievers) has not simply been distorted, it has been obliterated

59 The term appears infrequently in the New Testament, appearing only seven times (in addition to its appearances in 2 Cor 4:3), primarily in the gospels of Matthew (twice) and Luke (three times).

60 The term *κάλυμμα* appears in five of the seven verses in 3:12–18 (all except vv. 12 and 17). It is important to note that *κάλυμμα* is also rare in Paul, appearing only in these verses.

61 In 4:3–4, we also can perceive a faint echo of 3:2–3, where Paul had claimed that the Corinthian community represents his letter of recommendation. This letter, Paul insists is “known and read by all.” Ironically, however, 4:3–4 suggests that, like their Jewish contemporaries who cannot (correctly) read Moses, Paul’s opponents cannot read the apostle’s letter of recommendation.

62 It is worth noting, based upon what Paul says in Romans 9–11, that he believes that Israel (or at least a remnant of Israel) will ultimately be saved.

(i.e., “blinded”). The appearance of the verb τυφλώω in 4:4 (over against the verb παρώω in 3:14a) suggests that Paul’s critics possess a much more severe handicap. They cannot perceive Paul’s gospel at all; it is completely hidden from them.

This brings us to the third point of connection: the one responsible for the obstruction of each group’s thinking. Obviously, there is a vast difference between the agents responsible for the interference of the two groups’ νοήματα. Since the phrase ἀλλὰ ἐπωρώθη τὰ νοήματα αὐτῶν (3:14a) functions as a *passivum divinum*, Israel’s thought processes have been impeded by the deity. That is to say, her perceptual handicap was part of God’s plan.⁶³ But, such was not the case for Paul’s detractors. Although their thinking was obstructed by a god, it was not obstructed by *the* God; rather, it was blocked by the “the god of this age,” Satan.

Therefore, as we can see, the various connections between 3:13b–15 and 4:3–4 make it difficult to deny that Paul introduces Israel and his Jewish contemporaries into his argument in order to further his apologetic agenda. In other words, in 3:13b–15, Paul implicitly asks the Corinthians if they are able to truly perceive the message of his διακονία (i.e., *his* gospel). He insists that, unlike Moses, who hid something vital from Israel, he has hidden nothing from them. Instead, he has been extraordinarily open (πολλῇ παρρησίᾳ χρώμεθα). But despite his efforts, the possibility nevertheless remains that, like Israel, the Corinthians’ interpretive capacity has been compromised and so, they (or at least some of them) might “misread” Paul in the same way that their Jewish contemporaries misread “Moses.”

Curiously, after 3:15, Israel’s perception is no longer explicitly mentioned. Nor is Moses the text referenced. Instead, beginning in 3:16, we see another significant shift in subject matter. Paul once again turns his attention to Moses the human being. But, in these final few verses of this section, the lawgiver plays a very different role than he had previously in the letter.

Moses the Paradigmatic Believer: 2 Cor 3:16–18

Up until this point in the letter, Paul employed the figure of the lawgiver in relationship to himself. In the first section examined, Moses played the role of the διάκονος—made fit (ἱκανός) by the deity. It was to this figure that the apostle implicitly compared himself in 2:16b–3:6. In the next section (3:7–11), Paul focused on Moses’ ministry and the glory that attended it in comparison to the

63 As argued above, although this idea is merely implied here, it is openly expressed in Rom 11:7–12.

surpassing δόξα of his own ministry. In the first two verses of the section under discussion (3:12–13), the apostle *contrasted* the lawgiver's act of veiling his face to his own openness (παρρησία). Following that, in 3:14–15, Moses (the text) was set up as an object of truth, although it could be misunderstood. Against Moses the text, Paul set his gospel and against Israel, he juxtaposed the Corinthians.

Beginning in 3:16, we see that Moses still functions as a figure to whom Paul will draw a comparison. But, in these later verses of the section, Moses emerges as one to whom Paul compares *believers*. Since the emphasis shifts away from the juxtaposition of Moses and Paul and toward the comparison of Moses with believers, Paul's attention to his own role likewise seems to diminish. This raises the important question about the function of Moses as a model for believers in Paul's defense. How would such a comparison promote Paul's apologetic agenda? This is a question to which we will return. For now, we will look at the role that Moses plays in these verses.

Turning to the Κύριος

Although the flesh and blood figure of Moses reappears in 3:16, English translations typically obscure his return. The NRSV, for example, renders the verse as follows, "but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed." Moses seems nowhere in sight here. Instead, the subject of the sentence is simply "one," suggesting "anyone." But to translate the text as the NRSV does, we should expect to find the indefinite pronoun τις in the sentence.⁶⁴ Since that pronoun does not appear, however, we should assume that the verse's subject is not an indefinite "one" but instead the third person singular ("he") that is embedded within the verb επιστρέψῃ.

The parallels between 2 Cor 3:16 and Exod 34:34 (cited below) suggest that Paul's intent here is to call to the reader's mind that particular Exodus text, a text in which Moses is the subject.⁶⁵

64 It could, of course, be argued that by adding "someone," the translators are, to some extent, correct; Paul obviously means to show that "the one who turns to the Lord" (i.e., the believer) imitates the actions of Moses with similar results (i.e., unveiled perception). For this reason, Furnish assumes "an unexpressed τις as the subject of the verb" (*II Corinthians*, 210). Cf. Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 101; Collange, *Enigmes*, 103.

65 W.C. van Unnik has suggested that Paul did not mention Moses' name here because he wanted to broaden the reference so that it applied more generally, such as to those in Paul's audience ("'With Unveiled Face,' An Exegesis of 2 Corinthians Iii 12–18," *NovT* 6 [1963]: 166).

2 Cor 3:16

ἡνίκα δὲ ἐὰν ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς κύριον, περιαιρεῖται τὸ κάλυμμα

Exod 34:34

ἡνίκα δ' ἂν εἰσπορεύετο Μωϋσῆς ἔναντι κυρίου λαλεῖν αὐτῷ, περιηρεῖτο τὸ κάλυμμα ἕως τοῦ ἐκπορεύεσθαι

One particularly notable similarity between the two verses is the unusual temporal particle ἡνίκα (“when”), a particle that appears nowhere else in Paul’s letters except here and in the verse that immediately precedes it.⁶⁶ The verb περιαιρέω in the main clause of each sentence is also rare. Although it appears in a few places in the New Testament, it is only employed by Paul in this verse.⁶⁷ But besides these two unusual words, there are other important verbal and structural similarities between 2 Cor 3:16 and Exod 34:34.⁶⁸ Taken together, such similarities provide irrefutable evidence that Paul, in 3:16, intended to point to Exodus 34:34.

However, the close similarities between the verses also suggest that the apostle likely intended to *quote* the Exodus passage and not simply allude to it.⁶⁹ This suggestion is further supported by the verse that immediately follows, for that verse (or at least its beginning) presents the reader with what looks like an exegetical comment on the verse that precedes it.⁷⁰ In short, in 3:16, Paul seems to quote scripture and, in 3:17, he appears to interpret the scriptural text for his readers. But, what was Paul’s purpose in quoting Exodus 34:34 in 2 Cor 3:16?

66 The term ἡνίκα appears in the New Testament nowhere outside of the Pauline corpus.

67 It is rare in the New Testament, appearing only in Acts 27:20 and 28:13 and Heb 10:11.

68 Verbal similarities include the fact that both verses share the terms κύριος and κάλυμμα and furthermore, the terms ἡνίκα, κύριος, περιαιρέω, and κάλυμμα all appear in the same order in both 2 Cor 3:16 and Exod 34:34. Structurally, both verses open with a temporal clause, consisting of the same temporal particle, followed by a finite verb, and a prepositional phrase focused on the subject’s encounter with the κύριος. The independent clause that follows each verse’s temporal clause describes the removal of the veil in each case, using the same verb (Oliveira, *Diakonie*, 84). There are, of course, some differences between 2 Cor 3:16 and Exod 34:34. Of the differences, the most notable are Paul’s omission of Moses’ name, and his omission of the two phrases: λαλεῖν αὐτῷ and ἕως τοῦ ἐκπορεύεσθαι. For the various differences, see Windisch, *Zweite Korintherbrief*, 123. For a helpful discussion of the question of whether or not Paul is quoting or alluding to Exod 34:34, see Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 268–69.

69 It is worth noting that some translations (e.g., the NEB) present 3:16 as a quotation.

70 See, for example, van Unnik, “Unveiled Face,” 165; Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 89; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 212; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 274 and Lindemann, “Hermeneutik,” 55.

It is sometimes argued that Paul used Moses here in order to demonstrate the solution to the hermeneutical problem faced by the Jews of Paul's time. Such an interpretation would then see 3:16 as a logical continuation of the narrative of 3:14–15: just as Moses turned to the Lord in Paul's narration of Exod 34:34, so too should Paul's Jewish contemporaries turn to the κύριος.⁷¹ Their turn to the Lord (i.e., Christ) would free them from their veiled reading so that they could then interpret the Torah correctly (i.e., ἐν Χριστῷ; cf. 3:14c).⁷²

But there are a couple of problems with this line of interpretation. First, as mentioned above, in the context of Paul's apologetic strategy, a focus on the theme of Israel's unbelief (and subsequent conversion) is difficult to justify. How would it advance Paul's defense? Second, the proposed reading—that Moses' turn to the κύριος is meant primarily as an example for Israel—must indicate that κύριος in this verse refers to Christ (rather than the deity) since Israel, of course, would have had no need to turn to her own deity.⁷³ But Christ as the referent of κύριος is unlikely. Rather, in the context of 3:16, κύριος almost certainly refers to God.⁷⁴ A better possibility is that Moses in 3:16 is not meant

71 E.g., Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 122; Lindemann, "Hermeneutik," 55. The Good News Bible also translates the text to be read in this way. Such an interpretation is also cited as a possibility by Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 70.

72 Among those who understand the κύριος to point to Christ are Philipp Bachmann, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther*, KNT 8 (Leipzig: Deichert, 1922), 170; Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 102; Windisch, *Zweite Korintherbrief*, 123; Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 89; and Lindemann, "Hermeneutik," 55–56.

73 Bachmann, *Zweite Brief*, 170; Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 102.

74 There are a number of reasons to justify this conclusion. One is the plain sense of the Exodus text. In that narrative, Moses obviously interacts with the deity, not with Christ. If Paul had intended the reader to understand that Moses actually saw Christ in the Tent of Meeting, we would expect some indication, perhaps something along the lines of the exegetical comment in 3:17a where the apostle informs the reader that "the κύριος is the Spirit." It should also be noted that if Paul intended his readers to understand κύριος as a reference to Christ, there would have been no need for him to add the exegetical comment in 3:17a. Paul's argument could be summarized: Moses turned to Christ in the Tent of Meeting, therefore, believers should also turn to Christ. No further explanation would be necessary. Further support for the κύριος as representing the deity rather than Christ comes from Paul's use of scripture. Whenever the apostle quotes the scriptures—as he seems to do here—the term κύριος points to the deity rather than Christ (James D.G. Dunn, "2 Corinthians 11.17—"The Lord is the Spirit," *JTS* 21 [1970]: 317). Of course, it is also possible that Paul here is punning on the term κύριος (in rhetorical terms, he would be employing paranomasia). In other words, the apostle's suggestion that both Moses and the Corinthians turned to the κύριος did not mean that they turned to the same entity.

to serve as a model for Israel but for the community of gentile Corinthians.⁷⁵ Since Paul's focus in 2 Cor 2:14–7:4, particularly up to this point, has been on his relationship with the Corinthians, such an interpretation would seem to fit better into his strategy. But two possible objections could be raised against this suggestion.

First, if by the *κύριος* (i.e., the *κύριος* to whom Moses turned), Paul meant the deity (as indicated above), then it is unclear how Moses' action was comparable to the conversion of the Corinthians? Would not the Corinthian community, as Christ-believers, have turned to *Christ* the *κύριος* rather than to God the *κύριος*? In response, I suggest that, although it would be unwise to underestimate the community's focus on Christ, it is nevertheless important to remember that, from the perspective of a *gentile*, that which most radically changed with the entry into the *ἐκκλησία* was the shift from polytheism to absolute monotheism. Paul himself recognizes this when he contrasts the pagan past of his communities with their current state. In the places where he mentions their past, he emphasizes their move from polytheism to the worship of the true God.⁷⁶ Consequently, comparing Moses' turn to the *κύριος* in the Tent of Meeting to the Corinthians' turn to the one, true God makes good sense.

The second objection has to do with Paul's narration of the removal of Moses' veil in the latter part of 3:16 and the applicability of this part of the story to his readers. Since Paul did not describe the (gentile) Corinthians as veiled prior to their conversion (unlike Israel who in 3:14b–15 is clearly depicted as veiled), could the apostle really have intended Moses as a model for the gentiles? While this is a significant objection, nevertheless, as we will see, at the end of the section (3:18a), Paul describes the Corinthian believers (and, indeed, all believers) as unveiled. It is clear that Paul's interest lies not in the *removal* of a veil per se but rather in pointing out that his Corinthian supporters, like Moses (and unlike Israel), perceive without a veil (i.e. without hindrance) the

While Moses turned to the *κύριος* (here meaning *YHWH*), the Corinthians turned to the *κύριος* (here meaning *Christ*). While paranomasia often centers on similar-sounding words, sometimes it deals with the different sense of the same term. See Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, 681 who gives such an example from Isocrates *Panegyricus* 119. This possibility, however, seems unlikely.

75 Since Paul is arguing metaphorically here, it is important that we not deny that other meanings are possible. In other words, it would be unwise to insist absolutely that Moses here could *not* serve as a model for veiled Israel. Such is certainly a possibility. However, my endeavor is to find Paul's focus, that is to say, the *primary* role that Moses was intended to play in his apology.

76 1 Thess 1:9; Gal 4:8; cf. 1 Cor 12:2.

glory of the Lord (ἡ δόξα κυρίου).⁷⁷ Consequently, these two objections to interpreting Moses as a model for the gentile Corinthians can be dismissed. Further support for this interpretation will come in the exegetical comment, “now the Lord is the Spirit,” appearing in the verse that follows.

“The Lord is the Spirit”

The exegetical comment in 3:17 functions as a clarification for Paul’s readers. More specifically, it explains how the quoted scriptural text of the previous verses applies to their situation.⁷⁸ With his comment, “now the Lord is the Spirit,” Paul affirms that the κύριος that Moses experienced in the Tent of Meeting is the same entity as the Spirit that the Corinthians experienced at the time of their conversion.⁷⁹ In other words, here the apostle explains that, by turning to the Spirit, the Corinthians actually turned to the deity.⁸⁰ In this regard, they resemble Moses.

Following Paul’s identification of the κύριος with the Spirit in 3:17a, Paul then adds the assertion, “and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (ἐλευθερία).”⁸¹ What Paul means by “freedom” here is not immediately apparent. Several possibilities have been suggested. Perhaps Paul here means “freedom” in the sense of παρρησία; as we have already seen, παρρησία implies the freedom to speak and act openly. This is the sense that the word has in 3:12. But, Paul’s claim of παρρησία in that earlier verse was made in the context of *his own* actions as a διάκονος of the deity (3:12); in 3:17 he seems focused instead on the Corinthians.

Others have suggested that Paul here means freedom from the Law. In Thrall’s words: “freedom from slavery to the law of Moses, and from the destiny

⁷⁷ Cf. Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 282–83.

⁷⁸ Much has been made of this brief statement, particularly with regard to Paul’s Christology. For a summary, see Collange, *Enigmes*, 107–10. Our concern, however, must remain focused on the historical context of Paul’s argument.

⁷⁹ The term ἐπιστρέφω, which in 3:16 Paul substitutes for εἰσπορεύω of Exod 34:34, carries the connotation of conversion throughout the New Testament. See Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 89.

⁸⁰ Although κύριος with the article usually refers to Christ rather than God, nevertheless ὁ κύριος in 3:17 refers to the deity. This is because the article here is anaphoric, that is, ὁ κύριος in 3:17a points back to the κύριος previously mentioned in 3:16. See Dunn, “2 Corinthians III.17,” 317 and Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 122.

⁸¹ Paul here refers to the Spirit as the “Spirit of the Lord” (τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου), a common expression in the LXX (רוח יהוה in the MT).

of sin and death that goes with it.”⁸² This suggestion, I would argue, is correct but only in a certain sense. While Paul likely points to the law here, nevertheless, as we have already seen, there is no indication that the Corinthians were interested in Judaizing. Consequently, Paul could hardly have meant that the Corinthians had gained their freedom from the “slavery” of *Torah observance* as Thrall suggests. But, given the argument that Paul presents in 3:7–11, the latter part of Thrall’s phrase, “freedom . . . from the destiny of sin and death,” would certainly be correct. That is to say, when the gentiles of Corinth, previously condemned by Moses’ glorious ministry of death, “turned to the Lord” (i.e., the Spirit), that condemnation was rendered powerless. Or, as Paul had claimed in his letter to the Galatian gentiles, upon their conversion, they had been freed from the curse of the Law (Gal 3:13–14).⁸³

There may, however, be more to the idea of freedom here than liberation from the Law’s condemnation. Both Philo and Epictetus argue that the true wise man gains freedom by attaching himself to the deity.⁸⁴ Epictetus points to both Socrates and Diogenes as examples of such while Philo, not surprisingly, holds up Moses as his paradigm. In Philo’s words, the lawgiver:

... who was possessed by love of the divine and worshipped the Self-existent only [had] passed from man to a god, though indeed a god to men, not to the different parts of nature, thus leaving to the Father of all the place of King and God of gods. Does one who has obtained so great a preferment deserve to be considered a slave and not rather the solely free?⁸⁵

Of course, with the freedom that comes from one’s attachment to the divine comes the true understanding of reality. As Philo claims earlier in the same treatise:

Rising above the opinions of the common herd [wise individuals] have opened up a new pathway, in which the outside world can never tread, for studying and discerning truths, and have brought to light the ideal forms which none of the unclean may touch.⁸⁶

82 Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 275; cf. Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 104; Windisch, *Zweite Korinther-brief*, 126; and Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 123–24.

83 Cf. Räisänen, *Paul*, 19–20. See the discussion of Galatians 3 and 4 in the previous chapter.

84 Epictetus, *Diatribai* 3.24.60–66; 4.1.153–54; etc.; Philo, *Prob.* 43–44.

85 *Prob.* 43–44.

86 *Prob.* 3.

If indeed Paul intended such a connection here, then the freedom gained by the Corinthians—when they turned to the Lord—would also point to their freedom from veiled vision (such as that which hindered Israel's perception). As such, it would anticipate the opening words of the verse that immediately follows, 3:18.

Vision and Transformation

In 3:18, Paul concludes the section with a relatively complicated sentence that brings together a number of the ideas articulated up to this point in the letter:

And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image, from glory to glory; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

Unfortunately, this verse is full of exegetical problems. Because of these problems and also because of the complexity of the sentence, we will break it down into its five component parts and examine each in turn.

- a) ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ
- b) τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι
- c) τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα
- d) ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν
- e) καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος.⁸⁷

The first phrase (ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ) has as its subject “all of us” (ἡμεῖς πάντες). Obviously, Paul includes himself (as διάκονος) in the subject along with the Corinthian believers.⁸⁸ However, as with the previous two verses (3:16–17), Paul's focus remains on the community in this verse rather than himself.⁸⁹

87 Cf. Plummer, *Second Epistle*, 103.

88 Although our focus will be on the Corinthians in our analysis of this verse, much of what Paul says obviously also applies to himself. He also has an unveiled face, has seen the “glory of the Lord,” has been transformed, etc.

89 It should also be noted that, since he refers to the unveiled faces possessed by all believers here (ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ), it is clear that he implicitly excludes potential detractors, οἱ ἀπολλύμενοι mentioned in 2:15 and 4:3 and οἱ ἄπιστοι in 4:4. This group, as we have seen, comprises those in the community from whom his gospel is hidden (κεκαλυμμένον, 4:3).

As the initial phrase of the verse implies, the Corinthians resemble Moses because they, like the lawgiver, stand before the deity with unveiled faces. Paul here makes explicit the comparison between Moses and the believers that was implied in his quotation of Exod 34:34 and the exegetical comment that followed (3:16–17): Moses' experience of the κύριος in the Tent of Meeting parallels the Corinthians' experience of the Spirit in the ἐκκλησία. In the second phrase of the verse (τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτρίζομενοι), Paul continues to emphasize the similarities shared by Moses and the Corinthians. With his claim that "all of us" see "the glory of the Lord" (τὴν δόξαν κυρίου), he once again portrays the lawgiver as the paradigm for believers: just as Moses viewed God's glory, both on Sinai and later in the Tent of Meeting (2 Cor 3:7; 3:16; cf. Exod 34:29; 34:34–35), so too the Corinthians experience ἡ δόξα κυρίου.⁹⁰ But exactly what does Paul mean by the phrase ἡ δόξα κυρίου? And how do the Corinthians experience it?

What Paul means by the phrase ἡ δόξα κυρίου in 3:18 can be understood by considering a similar expression, "the glory of God" (ἡ δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ) several verses later, in 4:6. There Paul states:

For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God (τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ) in the face (ἐν προσώπῳ) of Jesus Christ" (4:6).

In this passage, a text in which Paul clearly alludes to his commission, he mentions "the glory of God in the face of Christ."⁹¹ By suggesting that God's glory can be seen in connection with Christ, Paul almost certainly means that the glory of the deity can be perceived in Christ's salvific death and subsequent resurrection. If we interpret 3:18 in light of 4:6 then we can infer that, when Paul speaks of believers perceiving ἡ δόξα κυρίου in the earlier verse, he means that the glory of God can be seen in Christ's death and resurrection.⁹² Furthermore,

90 As in 3:16 and 17, κύριος here points to God. There are a several reasons for this conclusion. First, Paul often refers to the glory of God but rarely the glory of Christ (only once, in 2 Cor 8:23). For the former, see Rom 1:23; 3:23; 5:2; 15:11; 1 Cor 10:31; 11:7; 2 Cor 4:6; 4:15; Phil 1:11; 2:11. Second, although the expression ἡ δόξα κυρίου is rare in Paul's letters (only here and in 2 Cor 8:19, where it most likely points to God), it is frequent in the LXX (often in connection with Moses) and Paul likely reflects that text's usage (cf. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 214). Third, in the previous two verses, Paul uses the κύριος to refer to the deity. It would subsequently be odd to see him use the term with a different referent here (cf. Collange, *Enigmes*, 118–19; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 214; and Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 283).

91 Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 316–18. See also Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 135.

92 Paul B. Duff, "Transformed from Glory to Glory: Paul's Appeal to the Experience of His Readers in 2 Cor 3:18," *JBL* 127 (2008): 770–74.

for Paul, the “glory of the Lord” mentioned in 3:18b would obviously point to the δόξα attached to his own ministry, a ministry of Spirit and righteousness (3:8–9), whose glory far surpasses the condemnatory δόξα brought about by Moses’ ministry.

But, in what way would the Corinthians have perceived the deity’s salvific act? One simple answer is that the believers experienced ἡ δόξα κυρίου when they heard the gospel message.⁹³ While this is certainly possible, Thrall has insisted that there must be more to the Corinthians’ experience than merely *hearing* the gospel message. That simple auditory experience, she insists, can hardly be correlated to Paul’s life-changing Christophanic encounter that he describes in 4:6:

Perhaps [Paul] did expect his readers . . . to be content with the “representative” function of the preached gospel. And yet, in 3:18 . . . he seems to be trying to persuade them that they did themselves, in some way, *behold* God’s glory.⁹⁴

If Thrall is correct and Paul is pointing to something more in the lives of the Corinthians than simply hearing the gospel, what could that something more have been? How could the Corinthians have more tangibly perceived “the glory of the Lord?” In order to answer this question, we must first turn to the concluding word of 3:18b.

Paul ends 3:18b with the participle κατοπτρίζομενοι. While the verb κατοπτρίζω typically means “to show as in a mirror,” the participial form (in the middle voice) would mean something like “to look in a mirror,” “to behold oneself as in a mirror,” or “to behold (something) in a mirror.”⁹⁵ The mirror imagery suggests that the Corinthians have perceived ἡ δόξα κυρίου in themselves.⁹⁶ This can be

93 E.g., Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 125; Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 61–62.

94 Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 319. Thrall puts “representative” within quotation marks because she is responding to Furnish’s suggestion that “the gospel is introduced as the fundamental re-presentative agency for the splendor of God” (Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 248).

95 Other translations that have been proposed include “to reflect in a mirror” or “to see” (without reference to a mirror). It has also been suggested that Paul meant the term ambiguously so that it could mean either “to see as in a mirror” or “to reflect as a mirror” (Collange, *Enigmes*, 116). For a detailed discussion of the options, see Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 214 and Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 290–91.

96 Duff, “Transformed,” 769, 773. It is possible that with the use of this participle, Paul alludes to another, more subtle, connection between the Corinthians and Moses. According to the above translation of κατοπτρίζομενοι, it seems clear that the Corinthians see “the glory of the Lord” in an indirect way; they see it “as in a mirror.” According to Exod 33:20–23, a passage that appears shortly before the text that Paul focuses on throughout 3:7–11 (i.e.,

understood either individually or corporately. That is to say, Paul could mean that each *individual* perceives in him or herself ἡ δόξα κυρίου or, alternatively, he could mean that *the community* can see in itself “the glory of the Lord.” Although these two possibilities are by no means mutually exclusive, Paul’s implicit reference earlier, in 3:2–3, to the transformation of the whole community (i.e., into his letter) favors the latter.⁹⁷

With this in mind, we can return to the question of the Corinthians’ experience of God’s salvific event, that is, “the glory of the Lord.” To ask the question in a particularly simple way: how did the Corinthians know that they were reconciled to the deity and therefore saved? The answer appears later in the letter, in 2 Cor 5:5, where Paul states that the deity has given to believers the ἀρραβών (“the down-payment”) of the Spirit (cf. 1:22).⁹⁸ What Paul means by this assertion is that God has given the Corinthians, in the form of the Spirit, their first installment of what will come to them as a result of Christ’s sacrificial death. Based upon this, we can tentatively conclude that the community’s experience of the Spirit (whether by speaking in tongues, prophesying, healing, etc. [cf. 1 Cor 12:8–10]) has enabled them to perceive ἡ δόξα κυρίου in their own experience (κατοπτρίζομενοι).⁹⁹ Paul will return to this idea in the very last phrase of the verse (3:18e).

As the next two phrases affirm (3:18c and d), not only do the Corinthians see “the glory of the Lord” in their experience of the Spirit, they are also *transformed* by the Spirit. Their unobstructed perception (i.e., their unveiled vision) and their transformation occur simultaneously.¹⁰⁰ Their transformation gives

Exod 34:29–35), Moses also experienced the glory of the deity and he likewise experienced it indirectly for, after Moses asked that God reveal himself to him (ἐμφάνισμόν μοι σεαυτόν, 33:18), the deity agreed, but added a condition: the lawgiver could not look upon him directly. Rather, Moses sees the deity indirectly; he only is able to view the back of his passing δόξα (33:20–23).

97 This explanation of the mirror imagery resembles that of N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 185–89. See also Kuschnerus, *Gemeinde*, 203–6.

98 The term ἀρραβών is a commercial technical term that means “first installment,” “deposit,” or down-payment (BAGD, s.v.).

99 This resembles Paul’s argument in Gal 3:2.

100 The simultaneity of the acts of vision and transformation is clear because the present tense of the circumstantial participle indicates that its action is coincident with that of the main verb. The connection between vision and transformation is brought up later in the letter, in 5:16–17. On this passage, see, in particular, J. Louis Martyn, “‘Epistemology at the Turn of the Ages: 2 Corinthians 5:16,’” in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*, ed. W.R. Farmer, C.F.D. Moule and R.R. Niebuhr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 269–87.

them unimpeded vision and that vision allows them to perceive their transformation. Furthermore, these two phrases (3:18c and d) describe the Corinthians' transformation in two different ways. On the one hand, they are described in 3:18c as transformed "into the same image" (τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα). On the other hand, they are depicted in the phrase that follows (3:18d) as transformed "from glory to glory" (ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν). We will examine each of these expressions in turn.

The meaning of the first claim, that believers are transformed into "the same image," is not immediately clear. This assertion seems to point back to the previous statement that describes believers seeing "the glory of the Lord." Since, as we have already seen, "the glory of the Lord" here refers to the death and resurrection of Christ, then by his assertion that believers are transformed "into the same image," Paul must mean that they are transformed into the image of the dying and rising Christ. But could this possibly represent Paul's meaning? The next phrase, a statement that portrays believers' transformation as one "from glory to glory" (ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν)," will help us answer that question. Consequently, we will briefly turn to the later phrase (3:18d) and then return to the notion of transformation "into the same image" (3:18c).

What does Paul mean by ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν? Most believe that by this expression, Paul describes a progressive or gradual glorification of the believer, a process begun but not completed.¹⁰¹ This glorification presumably begins upon conversion, continues into the indefinite future, and is finally completed at the *eschaton*. But, while such a meaning is possible, there is nothing in the text that specifically recommends it. Indeed, the wording of the phrase, particularly the latter part of it, seems to argue against it for the suggestion that the words εἰς δόξαν refer to a future transformation seems to ignore the present tense of the verb μεταμορφούμεθα in 3:18c.¹⁰² But, more importantly, the future orientation of such a reading makes it difficult to see how the phrase contributes in any way to Paul's apologetic argument. We will return to the role that this expression plays in Paul's apology below. But for now, we need to ask how to make better sense of ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν?

It seems reasonable to assume that the sudden reappearance of the term δόξα in 3:18 was intended to draw the reader's attention back to the previous section (3:7–11) where the notion of "glory" looms large. In that earlier section,

101 E.g., Bultmann, *Second Letter*, 95; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 242; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 72; Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, 56; Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 286.

102 Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 286.

as we already saw, one manifestation of δόξα—specifically, the δόξα of Moses’ ministry of death—is compared to another—the δόξα of Paul’s ministry of Spirit. The two prepositions in 3:18d, ἀπό and εἰς, naturally suggest a transformation from one realm of δόξα (i.e., that of Moses’ ministry of death and condemnation) to the other (Paul’ ministry of Spirit and righteousness).

Interpreters unfortunately have been unwilling to understand the phrase in this way because they have typically assumed that the two ministries affect two entirely different populations: Moses’ ministry of death and condemnation impacted only those who followed the Law (Israel) and Paul’s ministry affected only his gentile converts. But, as we have seen, Paul’s focus throughout most of his argument has been on the gentile Corinthians. They have been affected by both ministries.

In light of our findings then, a clear connection between the phrase ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν in 3:18 and the reference to the glory of the two ministries in the earlier section (3:7–11) becomes evident. The initial reference to δόξα in the phrase ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν points to the “glory” of the ministry of death and condemnation” as it applies to the (gentile) Corinthians. The second reference points to the δόξα of Paul’s ministry of reconciliation and righteousness as it applies to that same population. In short, the transformation “from glory to glory” refers to the (gentile) Corinthians’ own experience of transformation from their previous status—condemned before God (by Moses’ glorious ministry of death and condemnation, 3:7, 9)—to their new status, reconciled to God (by Paul’s more glorious, life-giving [3:6b], ministry of Spirit and righteousness, 3:8, 9).¹⁰³

We can now return to the previous phrase that describes transformation “into the same image” and interpret it in light of the meaning of ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν. Taken together, these two phrases suggest that, in their transformation, the Corinthian believers in some way participate in the death and resurrection of Christ: they are transformed into τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα. Their transformation ἀπὸ δόξης (3:18d) points to the Corinthians’ liberation *from* (ἀπό) the realm of condemnation, a realm that manifests the avenging δόξα of the deity (cf. 3:7, 8a, 11a). Transformation from this realm corresponds to being united with Christ in his death. Paul articulates a similar idea in more detail in his letter to the Romans:

103 Duff, “Transformed,” 771–74.

... we have been united with [Christ] in a death like his... We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin (Rom 6:5–7).¹⁰⁴

In sum, the Corinthian transformation ἀπὸ δόξης represents their crucifixion with Christ.

With the two words that follow, εἰς δόξαν, Paul points to the Corinthians' transformation *into* (εἰς) a new realm, specifically, new life in ἐκκλησία. Such a transformation corresponds to Christ's resurrection. To refer again to Romans: "So you [believers] also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom 6:11).¹⁰⁵ In light of this understanding of the phrase ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν, the meaning of transformation "into the same image" (3:18c) is thereby clarified by Paul's expression in 3:18d, that the Corinthians are transformed "from glory to glory." When the two phrases (3:18c and d) are read together, they suggest that the Corinthians' transformation into "the same image" and "from glory to glory" reiterates the deity's transformation of Christ from death to life.¹⁰⁶

In the concluding phrase of 3:18, Paul once again takes up the subject of the Spirit, a topic that has played an important role in the letter thus far. Unfortunately, the expression καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος, like so many other phrases in 2 Corinthians 3, contains a significant exegetical problem.¹⁰⁷ The problem lies in the phrase's ambiguity, in particular, in the ambiguity of the last two words (κυρίου πνεύματος). It is not clear which of these two terms (κύριος or πνεῦμα—each in the genitive case) represents the object of the preposition ἀπὸ. Nor is the role of the remaining word obvious (i.e., the word that is *not* the object of the preposition). Various possibilities exist. The genitive of the term that is not the object of ἀπὸ could, for example, indicate possession, it could function adjectivally, or it could appear in apposition to the other noun.

104 We also see a similar notion later in 2:14–7:4, where Paul asserts: "one has died for all; therefore all have died" (5:14b). Unfortunately, this phrase is fraught with problems.

105 We see a very similar notion expressed later in 2:14–7:4 where Paul makes the claim: "If anyone is in Christ, [he or she is] a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (5:17). The phrase καινή κτίσις can also be translated, "there is a new creation" although this is less likely. For a thorough discussion of the translation of this phrase, see Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 426–28.

106 Duff, "Transformed," 778–79.

107 Of course, the identity of the κύριος is also problematic. But, in line with what we have already seen in 3:16, 17, and 18a, it is almost certain that God, and not Christ, is the referent in this phrase. See Dunn, "2 Corinthians 111.17," 318.

Given these various options, Thrall has listed at least seven different ways to understand the two words.¹⁰⁸ I suggest that the most probable translation of the phrase is that proposed by the NRSV, which renders it as follows: “for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.”¹⁰⁹ The strongest argument for this translation is its consistency with what Paul has argued both in the earlier portion of 3:18 and in the verses immediately prior (i.e., in 3:16–17). Following the NRSV translation, we thereby see the apostle making explicit what those earlier passages merely implied: that is, the claim that the transformation of the Corinthians has come about as a result of the action of the Spirit, which—as 3:17a has already indicated—is to be identified with the *κύριος* of the Exodus text (i.e., *YHWH*).¹¹⁰

In sum, in 3:18 (and particularly in 3:18b–d), Paul both returns to and highlights the topic of the Corinthians’ transformation, a subject that he had introduced earlier in the section, in 3:2–3. In those earlier verses, the apostle pointed to the transformation of the community (i.e., their conversion) as his letter of recommendation. Significantly, here in 3:18, we see not only an emphasis on their transformation, as we had in that earlier passage, we also encounter a reference to the perception of the Corinthians (3:18a–b), something that Paul had already touched upon in various places.¹¹¹

An important question that still needs to be considered concerns the reason that Paul would use Moses as a model for believers. While it is easy to see why Paul would compare *himself* to the lawgiver, his use of Moses as a model for the gentile Corinthians is somewhat puzzling. How would such a depiction of

108 These are listed by Thrall as follows: 1) “a sovereign Spirit,” 2) “the Lord of the Spirit,” 3) “the Spirit which is the Lord,” 4) “the Lord who is Spirit,” 5) “the Lord the Spirit” or “the Lord who is the Spirit,” 6) “*YHWH* who is (now with us as) Spirit,” and 7) “the Spirit of the Lord” (*Second Epistle*, 287).

109 Cf. Barrett, *Second Epistle*, 110 and Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 216. Similar is the translation by Martin, “the Lord who is the Spirit” (*2 Corinthians*, 57). Although Thrall ultimately opts for “the Spirit of the Lord,” nevertheless, she indicates that the option chosen above is “a likely possibility” (Thrall, *Second Epistle*, 287).

110 The preposition *ἀπό* here indicates causation or agency. See Thrall, *Second Corinthians*, 286. In this final phrase Paul draws the Corinthians’ attention back to his earlier claim that his ministry is, in fact, a ministry of the Spirit (3:8) as well as his claim that the Spirit was ultimately responsible for the creation of the community in that the community was “inscribed . . . by the Spirit of the living God” (3:3). As such, the community serves as Paul’s letter of recommendation (3:2–3).

111 E.g., in the ambiguous imagery of 2:14–16 and in the implicit contrast that he draws between Israel and the Corinthians in 3:14b–15. Paul will come back to this idea in various places in the rest of the letter (e.g., 4:3–4 [as we have already seen]; 4:8–9; 4:18; 5:7; 5:16; etc.).

the lawgiver contribute to Paul's apologetic endeavor? Fortunately, this question is not difficult to answer.

By comparing the Corinthians' conversion to Moses' act of turning to the Lord in the Tent of Meeting, Paul highlights their ability (at least their alleged ability!) to perceive accurately. In particular, like Moses, the Corinthians perceive "the glory of the Lord" in an unveiled way. Indeed, as Paul argues in 3:18, because of their transformation, they can see ἡ δόξα κυρίου in their lived experience, specifically in their experience of the Spirit. But seeing the glory of the Lord in themselves is only part of Paul's message here. The connection that he draws between perception and transformation also means that the Corinthians should be able to recognize ἡ δόξα κυρίου in Paul's ministry. They should be able to recognize that it was Paul's ministry of Spirit that enabled their transformation.

Summary: Believing is Seeing

In the final section of 2 Corinthians 3 (i.e., 3:12–18), Paul alludes to Exod 34:29–35 as he had in the previous section. Although he focuses on Moses in this section, he presents us with three *different* portraits of the lawgiver. First, we see the somewhat flawed διάκονος who veiled his face before Israel at Sinai. Next, we encounter Moses as a text that Paul's Jewish contemporaries are incapable of accurately reading. Finally, we see the lawgiver depicted as a model for the gentile believers in the Corinthian community. From these various portraits of Moses, Paul sets up a complex series of comparisons and contrasts.

In the early verses of the section, 3:12–15, Paul juxtaposes Moses' relationship with Israel over against his own relationship with the Corinthian ἐκκλησία. Moses, God's envoy to Israel, covered his face before the people, thus preventing Israel from accurately viewing the entirety of the Sinai revelation. But, it was not only the wilderness generation that was negatively affected by Moses' action. The "same veil" prevented the Jews of Paul's time from fully comprehending Moses (the text). But while Moses held something back from Israel, Paul claims that he held nothing back from the Corinthians.¹¹² Instead he insists that he has acted with great openness (πολλῇ παρρησίᾳ).

¹¹² Although the Corinthians are not directly mentioned in these verses, their presence is clearly implied.

Various questions implied by the text were clearly intended by the apostle to goad the Corinthians into recognizing both the apostle's integrity and his authority. These include: Do the Corinthians have the same perceptual handicap as Israel? Is their vision of Paul as distorted as Israel's vision of Moses (both the person and the text)? A few verses later (4:3–4), Paul implicitly compares those for whom "his gospel" is hidden/veiled (κεκαλυμμένον) with veiled Israel. Like Israel, his detractors have had their thinking process (νοήματα) disrupted. However, unlike Israel, their judgement has been interrupted (literally, "blinded") by Satan, "the god of this age" (4:4).

In 3:16–18, the final verses of the section, Moses' relationship with Israel drops from sight as does the contrast between the actions of Moses and Paul.¹¹³ From this point on, Moses comes to function as the model for the gentiles in Paul's community. In 3:16, Paul loosely quotes Exod 34:34, thereby constructing a comparison between the Corinthian believers and Moses: just as Moses' face was unveiled in the Tent of Meeting when he "turned to the Lord," so too Paul implies, the Corinthians' turn to the Lord—that is, their conversion—has gained for them transformed (i.e., unveiled) vision, a point that will be made explicit in the final verse of the chapter (3:18). An exegetical comment on the quotation of Exod 34:34 points out, first, that the Lord experienced by Moses is the same entity as the Spirit encountered by the Corinthians and, second, that the Corinthians have been liberated from the negative consequences of Moses' ministry (3:17).

In the final verse of the section, Paul points out that the Corinthians' unveiled perception has allowed them to see in their own experience the glory of the Lord. That is to say, they have perceived in their own transformation the image of the dying and rising Jesus. Like Jesus, they have moved from the realm of death (i.e., the condemnatory glory of Moses' ministry) to that of life (the glory of righteousness provided by Paul's ministry). The section concludes with the reminder that the Corinthians' transformation has come about because of the Spirit who, as in 3:17, is again identified with the Lord (i.e., the deity). The agent of their transformation, the Spirit, had of course come to them through Paul's ministry.

113 The contrast does not entirely disappear because in 3:18, the unveiled faces of "all of us" (all would include Paul) would call to mind the contrast between Paul and Moses from 3:12–13. This contrast, however, is clearly secondary to the main point, the Corinthians' comparison to the unveiled Moses of 3:16.

Reading Paul Reading Moses

Ever since Hans Windisch, in his 1924 commentary, suggested severing 2 Corinthians 3:7–18 from the apologetic context of the text surrounding it, scholars have labored under the assumption that the text as it stands does not make sense on its own. Although there have been many and varied attempts to explain it, most of them have shared the assumption that Paul's appeal to Moses and Israel in 3:7–18 had something to do with the arrival in Corinth of apostolic missionaries from elsewhere. Virtually all scholars have assumed that these missionaries arrived in Corinth with impressive letters of recommendation (perhaps from the leaders of the Jerusalem church), that they attempted to subvert Paul's authority, and that they tried to promote their own theological agenda within the community. The most serious disagreements among scholars arose over the nature of the missionaries' beliefs and whether the "false apostles" and the "super apostles" represented one group or two. In the previous six chapters, I have tried to account for Paul's use of Moses in 2 Corinthians 3 without recourse to rival apostles.

The present study commenced with an examination of the context of the passage, specifically, the circumstances that drove Paul to write about Moses. An analysis of the various hypotheses concerning the number and shape of the original letters contained in canonical 2 Corinthians resulted in the conclusion that 2 Cor 2:14–7:4 (minus 6:14–7:1) represents an early independent apologetic letter, shortly preceded by 2 Corinthians 8. Based upon that conclusion, an analysis of the various alleged references to rival apostles in the *apologia* of 2:14–7:4 was undertaken. That analysis yielded the conclusion that there is no compelling evidence that any outside rivals were present in Corinth when Paul composed 2:14–7:4.

Instead, the problems leading up to Paul's composition of 2:14–7:4 more likely arose from within the community, primarily in reaction to Paul's earlier writings to Corinth. Some of the problems can be traced back to the community's reception of 1 Corinthians. Ultimately, Paul's appeal for unity in that letter seems to have backfired. Instead, the community was probably further fractured. Most likely, at least some of those whose practices and/or opinions that Paul had criticized in 1 Corinthians turned on the apostle. Evidence from 2:14–7:4 indicates that Paul's practice of setting himself as a model for proper behavior was particularly galling to these people. From their point of view,

Paul's status as a manual laborer, his poverty, his humble appearance, and his poor speech (cf. 2 Cor 10:10) made him unfit for such a role.

Without any other intervening circumstances, perhaps Paul and the Corinthians could have worked out their differences. With care, the malcontents may have been brought around to Paul's way of thinking. Unfortunately, such was not to be. Instead, Paul's aggressive pursuit of the collection for the Jerusalem church caused another flare-up of anger and resentment directed against Paul. This time, however, others in the community were dragged into the controversy. By sending the letter now found in 2 Corinthians 8, Paul inadvertently provided just the ammunition that Paul's opponents needed. With the arrival of the letter—an appeal that strongly encouraged the Corinthians complete the collection—it seems that the tide of Corinthian opinion began to turn against Paul. This was primarily because Paul had unilaterally changed the plans for the collection's delivery. Although the apostle had previously promised the Corinthian community the right to choose delegates to take the money to Jerusalem, 2 Corinthians 8 shows him reneging on that promise. In that letter, he announced that he and “the brother who is famous among all the churches” would deliver the collection themselves.

The fact that the Corinthians had been cut out of the delivery of the collection aroused suspicions. People in the community began to wonder if Paul was indeed the person that he had claimed to be. Perhaps he was not really an envoy of the deity but was instead scheming against them (cf. 2 Cor 4:2). Maybe he was a charlatan, a “peddler” of religion (2:17; 4:2) intent only on taking their money (7:2b). For some, these suspicions were affirmed by the continual misfortunes that the apostle endured. The suffering that he underwent as a result of poverty, persecution, poor health, and the like were interpreted as punishment directed at Paul by the deity for his attempt to defraud them (cf. 2 Cor 6:9). As a result of such suspicions, some in the community likely wanted nothing to do with Paul while others were willing to give him a chance. Ultimately, Paul was encouraged, implicitly or explicitly, to reassure the community by procuring letters of recommendation that would affirm the apostle's integrity. Instead of letters of recommendation from third parties, however, Paul sent them his own letter of defense (2:14–7:4).

Early on in his apology, Paul implicitly appeals to Moses, the paradigmatic divine envoy of the past. The envoy of old, the apostle contends, had been no more fit for his role than was Paul. Nevertheless, God made him fit to challenge Pharaoh, to lead his people out of Egypt, and to mediate God's covenant with them. Likewise, God made Paul fit for his role as a *διάκονος* of a new covenant. Because his was a *διακονία* of Spirit, not letter (3:6), Paul insisted that

he had no need of the ordinary type of written documentation (i.e., letters of recommendation) desired by the community; rather, he already possessed a document appropriate to his *διακονία*: a Spirit-inscribed letter, engraved on his heart. That “letter” was the Corinthian *ἐκκλησία* itself and it, Paul implies, was superior to any text inscribed on a normal writing surface (such as stone or papyrus), including the Torah.

In the next part of Paul’s argument, he compares his ministry to that of Moses by alluding to Exod 34:29–35. He employs here an argument *a minore ad maius* that focuses on the “glory” attached to both Paul’s ministry and that of the lawgiver (3:7–11). Throughout the argument, Paul asserts two seemingly competing claims: First is the claim of continuity: his ministry resembles that of Moses because God’s *δόξα* is exhibited by each. Second is the claim of contrast: Paul asserts that Moses’s ministry was a ministry of death and condemnation (3:7, 9a) while his is a ministry of the life-giving Spirit and righteousness (3:8, 9b). The apparent tension between these two claims is resolved with the recognition that Paul is not here speaking about the Mosaic *covenant* (*διαθήκη*), a covenant between God and Israel, but instead he is focused on Moses’s *ministry* (*διακονία*) and the effect that it had on the Corinthians. The distinction is important because Paul, like other Jews of his time, believed that the coming of the Torah brought condemnation to the gentiles. As gentiles, the Corinthians were therefore negatively affected by the lawgiver’s ministry; for them, it was a ministry of death and condemnation. Paul’s ministry, to the contrary, undid those consequences by bringing the life-giving Spirit and righteousness to the (gentile) Corinthians.

While Paul’s *a minore ad maius* argument may seem, at first glance, to be totally unrelated to that which has preceded it, nevertheless there is a logic that connects it to the letter-Spirit antithesis introduced earlier (3:6). Ultimately, Paul’s *a minore ad maius* argument implicitly continues the discussion about letters of recommendation. Although Paul had earlier claimed that he possessed a letter of recommendation, he acknowledged that it was not a conventionally written letter. In the same way that the condemnation brought by Moses’s ministry of letter (*γράμμα*) no longer carried any force, Paul suggests that a conventionally written letter of recommendation likewise should carry no weight. Or to put it another way, the time of the letter (*γράμμα*) has passed for the Corinthians and the time of the Spirit has arrived. The Corinthians should therefore be assured of Paul’s legitimacy by his Spirit-inscribed letter (i.e., their own transformation). If they are not, so he implies, they have not been transformed; they still abide in the old age of the *γράμμα*, the era of their condemnation.

Paul then returns to Exod 34:29–35 to focus on a different aspect of that story: the idea of Moses’s veil. According to the Exodus narrative, Moses put

a veil over his face after descending the mountain because his face had been “glorified” while he spoke with the Lord. Paul alludes to Moses and his veil in three ways in this section in order to further his case. First, he alludes to Moses and his veil in order to make a point about his own behavior with the Corinthians. Moses put a veil over his face in order to hide something important from the Israelites of the wilderness generation. In this respect, Paul implicitly claims, Moses showed himself to be a somewhat flawed δῖάκονος. To the contrary, the apostle insists, he has employed total openness before the Corinthians. He has hidden nothing from them. With this claim, he both counters suspicions that he has been deceptive in his dealings with the community and he subtly shifts the blame for any tensions in the relationship on to the Corinthians.

Second, Paul uses the veil of Moses to bring Israel (past and present) into his argument. Surprisingly, in 3:14b–15, Paul focuses not on Moses the person but rather on Moses the text (i.e., the Torah). Furthermore, in these verses, he transitions from Israel of the wilderness generation to the Jews of his own time. He makes the claim that the same veil that blocked Israel’s vision of Moses in the wilderness now lay over the Jews’ reading of Moses the text. Paul here implicitly sets the Jews of his time against the Corinthians and, by so doing, indirectly raises a question about the Corinthians’ perception. In effect, he asks if their perception of him is as skewed as is Israel’s reading of Moses. Paul will later implicitly *compare* those in the community for whom his gospel is “veiled” (i.e., οἱ ἀπολλύμενοι) to veiled Israel (4:3–4). He will likewise *contrast* the rest of the community to veiled Israel by referring to them as those “with unveiled faces” (3:18).

Third and finally, Paul appeals to the narrative about Moses and his veil to set the lawgiver up as the paradigm for believers in Corinth (and elsewhere). In particular, in 3:16, Paul points to the verse in Exodus where the lawgiver encounters YHWH with an unveiled face (34:34). Just as Moses “turned to the Lord [and his] veil [was] removed” (3:16) so to, when the Corinthians “turned to the Lord” their perception was transformed (i.e., they could see in an “unveiled” manner). Paul makes the comparison explicit with the exegetical comment that follows: “now the Lord is the Spirit” (3:17). Here Paul points out that the Lord that Moses encountered (i.e., YHWH) is the same entity that the Corinthians turned to (i.e., the Spirit) at the time of their conversion. Paul wraps up his argument by reminding the members of the community that, due to their turning to the Lord, they now see, as in a mirror (i.e., in themselves) “the glory of the Lord” (i.e., the dying and rising of Jesus). They see their own transformation “from glory to glory” (3:18). With this phrase, Paul refers back to his earlier *a minore ad maius* argument (3:7–11) and thereby implicitly points

out that, with their conversion, the Corinthians have moved from the realm of the “glory” of Moses’ ministry of death to the realm of the “glory” of the ministry of the Spirit.

Perhaps Paul’s most important point appears in this final verse where the apostle emphatically claims that the Corinthians’ perceive “with unveiled faces.” In other words, he infers, transformation brings about transformed (i.e., “unveiled”) perception. Ultimately Paul’s point here is that if the Corinthians can see the “glory of the Lord” in their own experience, they should be able to perceive it in Paul’s ministry. As Paul will insist in the chapter that follows, they should be able to see that Paul’s continual poor health is not the result of God’s punishment but instead it serves the purpose of promoting the gospel. Paul’s sufferings do not result in his demise (4:8–9). To the contrary, they represent “carrying around the dying of Jesus” in his body (4:10a). In turn, his continual and remarkable survival of such hardships occurs “so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in [his] mortal flesh” (4:11b). In short, the Corinthians should be able to recognize in Paul’s suffering not the vengeance of God but his glory.

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Index of Authors

- Attridge, Harold W. 95, 96
- Bachmann, Philipp 196
- Barnett, Paul 46, 179, 182
- Barrett, C.K. 4, 27, 28, 46, 47, 49, 54–55, 61, 64, 68, 74, 79, 114, 115, 128, 145, 168, 169, 179, 182, 196, 198, 199, 201, 202, 207
- Bauernfeind, Otto 77
- Baur, F.C. 53–54, 59
- Beard, Mary 94, 95, 117, 118
- Becker, Eve-Marie 49
- Bieringer, Reimund 46
- Belleville, Linda L. 150, 172
- Betz, Hans Dieter 19, 20, 23, 24, 26, 30, 31, 46, 48, 48, 77, 79, 80, 82, 84, 105, 159
- Bleek, Friedrich 20, 21–22, 27
- Bornkamm, Günther 30, 31, 34, 38, 44, 46, 47–48, 49, 79, 82, 83
- Boyarín, Daniel 122
- Bruce, F.F. 27, 28, 46, 47, 49
- Bultmann, Rudolf 32, 38, 61, 97, 115, 126, 141, 179, 184, 190, 191, 195, 196, 198, 204
- Clemen, Carl 24
- Collange, J.-F. 24, 79, 89, 128, 146, 179, 189, 194, 198, 201, 202
- Collins, John N. 2
- Conzelmann, Hans 191
- Daube, David 139
- de Boer, Martinus C. 160
- Deissmann, Adolf 176
- Duff, Paul B. 25, 86, 92, 94, 95, 154, 201, 202, 205, 206
- Dunn, James D.G. 196, 198, 206
- Elliott, Neil 161
- Emmerling, Christian August
Gottfried 22–23
- Ewald, Howard Georg August 22, 27
- Farrar, A.M. 99
- Fee, G.D. 25
- Feldman, Louis H. 155
- Fishbane, Michael 121
- Fitzgerald, John T. 88, 95
- Fitzmyer, Joseph A. 23–24, 106
- Friedrich, Gerhard 56
- Friesen, Steven J. 82
- Furnish, Victor Paul 27, 28, 33, 40, 41, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 56, 60, 61, 64, 73, 74, 75, 79, 80, 87, 88, 89, 96, 97, 98, 102, 116, 120, 124, 126, 146, 168, 176, 178, 179, 181, 182, 189, 190, 194, 195, 201, 202, 204, 207
- Gager, John G. 147
- Garland, David 46
- Georgi, Dieter 2, 10, 31, 46, 48, 49, 56–58, 61, 70, 79, 99, 120, 147, 188
- Gnilka, Joachim 23–24
- Goodspeed, Edgar Johnson 24, 25
- Gunther, John J. 54
- Hafemann, Scott J. 94, 99, 101, 126, 128, 143
- Hagge, H. 20, 29
- Hagner, Donald 45
- Halmel, Anton 32, 47
- Hanson, Anthony T. 13
- Harrill, J. Albert 71
- Harris, Murray J. 46, 182
- Hausrath, Adolf 20, 26–27, 29, 47, 49, 50
- Hays, Richard B. 121–22, 123, 127, 128, 129, 179, 186
- Heinrici, C.F. Georg 39
- Hellholm, David 138
- Héring, Jean 115, 179
- Hilgenfeld, Adolf 24
- Hock, Ronald F. 70, 99, 113
- Hoffman, Paul 125
- Hofius, Otfried 141, 150, 177
- Howard, George 160
- Hübner, Hans 160
- Hurd, John Collidge, Jr. 25
- Jones, Peter R. 99
- Joubert, Stephan 81, 82, 106

- Käsemann, Ernst 11, 54
 Kennedy, James Houghton 26–27, 29, 47, 49, 50
 Keyes, Clinton W. 103
 Klauck, Hans-Joseph 103, 104, 105
 Kloppenborg, John S. 125
 Koester, Helmut 31, 48, 49
 Kümmel, W.G. 46
 Kuschnerus, Bernd 98, 99, 100, 115, 116, 124, 134, 142, 182, 203
 Lake, Kirsopp 24, 25, 26
 Lambrecht, Jan 5, 46, 58, 79, 126, 145, 179, 189, 202, 204
 Lane Fox, Robin 96
 Lietzmann, Hans 98, 120, 128, 189
 Lindemann, Andreas 144, 195, 196
 Longenecker, Bruce W. 70
 MacMullen, Ramsay 63
 Malherbe, Abraham J. 103, 174
 Marrow, Stanley B. 174
 Martin, Dale B. 71
 Martin, Ralph P. 5, 27, 28, 44, 54, 64, 79, 80, 90, 153, 179, 189, 196, 204, 207
 Martyn, J. Louis 159, 160, 161, 203
 Matera, Frank J. 46
 McCant, Jerry 46
 Meggitt, Justin J. 82
 Meeks, Wayne A. 59, 82, 101
 Meyer, Heinrich A.W. 38
 Michelsen, J.H.A. 29
 Mitchell, Margaret M. 31, 32, 46, 49, 51, 60, 66, 68, 75, 82–85, 110, 111, 120, 176
 Moule, C.F.D. 5, 203,
 Murphy-O'Connor, Jerome 23, 55–56, 68
 Nanos, Mark D. 181
 Newman, Carey C. 150, 163, 164, 166, 167
 Newsom, Carol 166
 Noy, David 59
 Novick, Tzvi 97
 Oliveira, Anacleto de 116, 134, 139, 175, 179, 195
 Oostendorp, Derk William 54
 Parsons, Mikeal C. 71
 Perrin, Norman 31
 Pervo, Richard I. 64, 81, 105
 Plummer, Alfred 26, 28–40, 45, 54, 55, 98, 126, 128, 146, 168, 179, 194, 196, 199, 200
 Poulsen, Frederik 68
 Quesnel, Michel 20
 Räisänen, Heikki 159–60, 161, 199
 Rajak, Tessa 59
 Rice, E.E. 96
 Rissi, Matthias 40, 41, 179
 Robinson, J. Armitage 183
 Robinson, James M. 125
 Roetzel, Calvin J. 46
 Sanders, E.P. 151–52, 155, 160, 161
 Schlier, Heinrich 160
 Schmithals, Walter 46, 49
 Schuller, Eileen 166
 Semler, Johann Solomo 1–19, 20, 21, 26, 29, 47, 49
 Smyth, Herbert Weir 97, 197
 Stanley, Christopher D. 123
 Stegemann, Hartmut 166
 Stemberger, Gunther 139
 Stockhausen, Carol Kern 22, 139
 Stone, Michael Edward 41
 Stowers, Stanley K. 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 159, 160, 161
 Strachan, R.H. 80
 Strack, H.L. 139
 Sumney, Jerry L. 54, 58, 61
 Taylor, N.H. 25, 46, 49
 Theissen, Gerd 152
 Thrall, Margaret E. 4, 5, 12, 19, 20, 26, 31, 33, 39, 40, 41, 45, 46, 47, 49, 58–59, 64, 73, 74, 79, 80, 87, 88, 98, 114, 115, 120, 124, 126, 127–28, 133, 144, 145, 146, 168, 169, 178, 179, 180, 182, 184, 185, 189, 190, 195, 198–99, 201, 202, 204, 206–7
 Unnik, W.C. van 194, 195

- Vegge, Ivar 20, 36, 46
Vernant, Jean-Pierre 80
Vielhauer, Philipp 32

Wan, Sze-kar 138–39
Watson, Francis 27, 28–29, 39–40, 47, 49,
50, 61

Weiss, Johannes 24, 25, 27, 29–30, 31, 32, 33,
41–42, 47, 83
Welborn L.L. 58, 63
Whitelaw, R. 24
Wright, N.T. 203
Wünsch, Hans-Michael 101, 116, 141

Index of Passages Cited

a) Old Testament/Hebrew Bible		39:3 (LXX)	127
		117:18 (LXX)	90
<i>Exodus</i>			
3:11	99		
4:1–9	102		
4:10	102, 132, 135		
4:12	100, 102, 135		
31:18	123–26, 127, 128		
32:19	3		
33:18	203		
33:20–23	202–3		
34:27	148		
34:29	147, 201		
34:29–35	1, 3, 9, 12, 14, 16, 57, 59, 144, 146, 147, 170, 173, 176, 186, 202–3, 208, 212		
34:34	5, 14, 194–95, 198, 201, 209, 213		
34:34–35	201		
<i>Deuteronomy</i>			
29:3	183		
30:11–14	122, 130		
<i>1 Samuel</i>			
4:12	163		
5	168		
5:8–10	163		
6:1–10	163		
<i>1 Kings</i>			
8:6–11	162		
<i>1 Chronicles</i>			
6:14–7:1–2	162		
<i>Job</i>			
17:7	181		
<i>Psalms</i>			
24	162		
26:8	162		
		<i>Proverbs</i>	
		3:3	127
		7:3 (LXX)	127
<i>Isaiah</i>			
		2:2–4	155
		29:10	183
		35:1–2	164
		40:1–11	164
		40:3–5	164
		58:8–9	164
		60:1–3	164
		66:18–19	155
<i>Jeremiah</i>			
		38:31–33 (LXX)	14, 116, 123
		38:33 (LXX)	126, 127, 128
<i>Ezekiel</i>			
		2:9–10	120
		9:3	163
		10:4	163
		10:18	163
		10:19	163
		11:19	127
		11:22–23	163
		36:23–27	129–30
		36:24	129
		36:26	123, 127–30
		38:5–6	164
		39	168
		39:1–4	164
		39:21	165
		43:2–5	164
		44:4	164
<i>Hosea</i>			
		10:5–6	163
<i>Joel</i>			
		2:11	99

Micah

4:1-5 155

*Zechariah*2:1-5 164
14:16-18 155-56

b) Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

Tobit

14:5-7 155-56

*1 Enoch*45:1-3 167
55:3-4 167
61:8 167*2 Baruch*48:39-43 158
82:2-9 157-58*4 Ezra*7:37-38 157
7:72 157*Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum (LAB)*11:2 156
12:1 149, 172
35:6 101*Odes of Solomon*

23 120

*Sibylline Oracles*3:573-600 158
3:580 158
3:602-3 158*Testament of Judah*

19:4 191

*Testament of Moses*1:12-13 156
11:16 101*Testament of Simeon*

2:7 191

c) Rabbinic Literature

Pesiqta Rabbati

10.6 149, 172

Tanhuma

9:37 148

Targum Pseudo Jonathan

Exod 34:29 147-48

d) Greco-Roman Literature

*Appian**Historia romana*
12.117 117*Apuleius**Metamorphoses*
8.26 72
11.8-16 117
11.9 96
11.13 118
11.15 119
11.16 118, 119*Aristotle**Rhetorica*
1.9.38 101
2.23.4 139-40*Athenaeus**Deipnosophistae*
197C-203B 117
202A-B 96*Cicero**De legibus*
2.29.9 85*Epistulae ad Brutem*12.1.6 108
13.1.1 109*Topica*

4.23 140

Dio Chrysostom*De avaritia*

8 80

De exilio

13.11 73

Epictetus*Diatribai*

2.3.1 74

2.19.24 88

3.24.60–66 199

4.1.153–54 199

Euripides*Hippolytus*

42–23 174

Isocrates*Areopagiticus*

41 127

Panegyricus

119 197

Josephus*Antiquitates judaicae*

8.30 190

18.16 85

Bellum judaicum

7.132–52 118

Contra Apionem

2.279–80 156

Lucian of Samosata*Alexander*

1 63

3 71–72

12 63

24 71

26 63

43 71

55 71

58 71

Cataplus

1.14–15 70

1.20 70

1.22 70

Hermotimus

59 79

De morte Peregrini

11–13 78

Piscator

35 80

Philo*De ebrietate*

108 190

De vita Mosi

1.156–58 101

2.17–22 156

2.70 149

Quod omnis probus liber sit

3 199

43–44 199

Pliny*Naturalis historia*

25.7 118

Plato*Phaedrus*

276A–C 127

Plutarch*Moralia*

1057D–E 88

Pseudo-Demetrius*Typoi epistolikoi*

2 103

Suetonius*Divus Julius*

37 117

Thucydides

2.43.3 127

Valerius Maximus

7.3.8 85

e) New Testament

Matthew

5:28 176
 12:28 125
 19:28 167
 26:6-13 176-77

Mark

6:52 183
 8:17 183

Luke

4:16-30 184
 4:20 184

John

12:40 183
 18:20 175

Acts

9:1-2 64
 9:2 105
 15 81
 18:8 59
 18:17 59
 18:27 112
 27:20 195
 28:13 195

Romans

1:8 119
 1:18-2:16 161
 1:19-32 154
 1:21 130
 1:23 201
 1:25 120
 2:13-15 161
 2:27 161
 3:2 122, 131
 3:23 201

5:2 201
 6:5-7 206
 7:3 153
 7:10 54
 7:12 153
 7:13 54
 7:14 153
 8:3 153
 9-11 186, 192
 10:5-8 122
 10:6-8 130
 10:19-21 186
 11:7 181, 182-83
 11:7-8 183
 11:7-12 193
 11:25 181
 15:11 201
 15:23 99
 15:26 28
 16 19
 16:1-2 64, 104
 16:20 191

1 Corinthians

1:4 59
 1:5 83
 1:10 66
 1:10-13 65-66
 1:18 179
 1:18-2:16 67
 1:29-30 62
 2:6 191
 3:1-9 66
 3:21 62
 4:8 70
 4:10 70
 4:16 75
 4:17 21
 4:18-19 62
 4:18-21 29
 5 12
 5:1-2 67
 5:1-5 21, 26
 5:1-13 66
 5:2 62
 5:5 190
 5:6 62
 5:9 24, 30, 65

6:1-6	67	14:22-25	190
6:6	190	14:33-40	68
7	75	15:1	188
7:1	65	15:3-4	186
7:5	190	15:9	90
7:6	83	15:24	179
7:7	75	16:1-4	82, 83
7:12-16	190	16:2	82, 83
7:25	83	16:3-4	84
7:35	83	16:6	112
7:39	25	16:10-11	21, 28
8	25	16:12	55
8-10	66, 68, 75, 186		
8:1-4	67	<i>2 Corinthians</i>	
8:4	66	1-7	19, 41
8:7	83	1-8	9, 12, 19, 33, 41, 47, 50
8:9-13	66	1-9	8, 9, 12, 26-29, 33, 44, 47, 49, 51, 83
9	70, 81		
9:1-2	115	1:1-2:13	43
9:12	66	1:1-2:13; 7:5-16	9, 32-46, 47-48, 49, 50, 51, 85
9:14	188		
9:18	66, 188	1:1-2:13; 7:5-8:24	49
9:19	70	1:1-7:4	49
10	25, 187	1:3-7	35
10:1-5	186	1:7	43
10:1-11	16, 186	1:7-2:1	44
10:2-6	123	1:11	43
10:5	187	1:14	115
10:6	187	1:15-23	8
10:11	179	1:17-2:1	42
10:14	123	1:17-2:4	42
10:20-21	25	1:22	203
10:24	190	1:23-2:10	50
10:28-29	66	1:24	43
10:31	201	2	12, 27, 29
11:1-16	68	2:2-4	42, 44
11:7	201	2:3-4	21, 22
11:17	67	2:4	26
11:27-29	90-91	2:5-8	26, 43
11:27-30	91	2:5-10	11, 29
11:30	91	2:5-11	85
12:1-31	68	2:6-10	12
12:2	197	2:7-8	35
12:8-10	203	2:9	26
12:11	64	2:10	43
13	62	2:11	190, 191
13:3-4	62	2:12	32, 33
14:18	75	2:12ff.	39
14:19	75	2:12-13	6, 28, 32, 33, 38, 39-40

<i>2 Corinthians</i> (cont.)		3:8	133, 142, 143, 205, 207, 212
2:12-7:4	29		202
2:13	33, 38-41, 45, 49, 50	3:8-9	57, 133, 142-43, 146, 150-51, 162, 169, 174, 205, 212
2:14	7, 17, 32, 33, 36, 38-41, 45, 50, 51, 135, 170, 179	3:9	142, 144-47, 171
2:14ff	39		142-43, 146, 150-51, 178
2:14-15	117	3:10	77, 98, 154, 174-175, 192, 198
2:14-16	6, 40, 93, 98, 207	3:11	14, 15, 138, 172, 173-80, 187, 194, 209
2:14-17	38	3:12	208
2:14-3:6	14, 16, 93-136		4, 14, 15, 17, 100, 138, 172-209
2:14-4:6	145	3:12-13	16, 17, 138, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 183, 186
2:14-6:2	49		187, 191, 192, 193
2:14-7:4	1, 2, 9, 12, 13, 16, 18, 20, 23, 25-26, 32-46, 47-48, 49, 50, 51, 52-92, 113, 114, 133, 134, 174, 175, 186, 191, 197, 206, 210, 211	3:12-15	122, 132, 133, 173, 178, 180, 183, 191, 192
		3:12-18	5, 17, 122, 173, 180-87, 191-93, 196, 197, 207, 213
2:15	97, 135, 188, 189, 200	3:13	180, 183, 185
2:16	2, 94, 98, 99, 100, 137	3:13-15	5, 14, 169, 173, 194, 196, 197, 198, 201, 206, 209, 213
2:16-3:6	69-72, 193	3:14	200, 201, 207
2:17	2-3, 60-61, 62-64, 78, 79, 80, 89, 90, 93, 98, 100, 102, 111, 112, 211	3:14-15	17, 193-208, 209
3:1	43, 53, 60-61, 64-65, 72, 73, 75, 93, 110, 112, 113, 115	3:15	15, 192, 198, 206, 207, 209, 213
		3:16	15, 187, 197, 200-208, 209, 213
3:1-3	93, 112, 171	3:16-17	2, 98, 102
3:2	43, 120, 124, 130	3:16-18	3, 73, 74, 77, 79, 80, 89, 90, 113, 175-76, 211
3:2-3	14, 15, 89, 113, 115-32, 137, 174, 192, 203, 207	3:17	80, 112
3:3	14, 93, 100, 120, 123-32, 137, 207	3:18	77, 188, 189, 192, 200
3:5	2, 69, 98		16, 177, 187-93, 207, 209, 213
3:5-6	2, 100, 102, 111, 137	4:1	23, 73, 144, 189-90, 191, 193, 200, 209
3:6	14, 69, 98, 100, 102, 126, 132-35, 137, 151, 170, 174, 205, 211, 212	4:2	56
		4:2-3	96, 98, 102, 144, 201
3:7	14, 54, 57, 133, 142, 144-47, 148-49, 162, 168, 169, 170, 174, 178, 184, 201, 205, 212	4:3	72, 86
		4:3-4	15
3:7-8	142-43, 146, 150-51	4:4	2, 88, 90, 189, 207, 214
3:7-9	168	4:5	89
3:7-11	4, 14, 16, 54, 58, 100, 133, 135, 137-71, 172, 173-74, 193, 202, 204-5, 212, 213	4:6	214
		4:7-9	
3:7-18	1, 3, 4, 5, 12, 13, 52, 53, 57, 59, 210	4:7-12	
		4:8-9	
		4:9	
		4:10	

4:10-11	188, 189	7:5ff.	39
4:10-12	86	7:5-6	28
4:11	214	7:5-7	6
4:14	45	7:5-13	34, 36
4:15	201	7:5-16	9, 33, 34-38, 43, 49
4:18	207	7:6	34, 35, 40
5:5	203	7:6ff	21, 28
5:7	207	7:6-12	50
5:10	45, 114	7:6-13	50
5:11	113, 114	7:6-15	8
5:11-12	114	7:6-16	19
5:12	60-61, 61-62, 73, 74, 75, 113	7:7	34, 35, 36, 39
5:14	169, 206	7:8	44
5:16	207	7:8-11	41
5:16-17	203	7:8-12	21, 22, 26
5:17	206	7:9-11	41
5:18	102, 169	7:11-12	26
5:18-20	178	7:12	27, 29, 61, 85
5:20	2, 35, 37, 176	7:12-13	11, 12
6:1	35, 37	7:13	34, 35, 36
6:2	24	7:14	37
6:3	3, 112	8	8, 9, 18, 19, 20, 26, 28, 29-32, 41, 47-48, 49, 50, 51, 82-85, 91-92, 110, 111, 114, 135, 210, 211
6:3-10	3		
6:3-13; 7:2-4	49		
6:4	72, 73, 74, 114	8:4	82
6:4-5	74, 88	8:6	83, 105
6:4-10	74, 87-89	8:8	83
6:6	77	8:10	83
6:6-7	87	8:10-11	8
6:7	77	8:16-17	50, 51
6:7-8	87, 176	8:16-22	111
6:8-10	87-90	8:16-24	8, 64, 105
6:9	3, 211	8:18	83
6:10	88	8:18-19	83, 84
6:11	43, 78	8:18-21	110
6:11-13	177	8:19	84, 111, 201
6:12	78	8:20	111
6:13	23, 78	8:23	105
6:14-7:1	6, 9, 13, 16, 20, 22-26, 30, 32-33, 47-48, 49, 51, 52, 210	9	9, 18, 19, 20, 26, 29-32, 37, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51 30, 82
7	12, 27, 29, 30, 32	9:1	7, 8, 37
7:2	3, 36, 78, 79, 80, 89, 90, 111, 112, 211	9:2	37, 145
7:4	32, 33, 34-38, 43, 49, 50, 175	9:3	185
7:5	7, 32, 33, 34, 37, 38, 50, 51	9:7	7
		9:11-12	8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 19, 20, 22, 26-29, 32, 44, 47-48, 49, 50, 51, 52-69, 79, 101
		10-13	

2 Corinthians (cont.)

10:1-11	7-8
10:1-13:10	19
10:7	53
10:8	37
10:10	28, 71, 101, 211
10:12	56
10:13	37
10:15	37
10:16	37
10:17	37
11:4	8, 10, 11, 188
11:5	11, 53, 57, 60
11:4-6	10
11:7-10	8
11:8-9	81
11:12-15	10, 61
11:13	11, 53
11:14	191
11:14-15	190
11:19-21	8
11:20	61
11:21-23	11
11:23	11
11:24	175
12	50
12:1	10, 53, 56
12:2	59
12:7	191
12:11	11, 57
12:11-13	8
12:12	56
12:12-13	8
12:16-18	8
12:17-18	30, 50, 51, 81
12:18	8, 28
12:21	8, 21
13:1	8, 21, 26
13:2	8
13:11-13	19

Galatians

1:6	188
1:11	188
1:13-17	90
1:14	131
1:16	174

2:1-10	81, 106
2:2	188
2:7	188
2:10	82
2:11-14	55
2:14ff.	160
2:19	55
3:2	159
3:2-5	159
3:10	159
3:10-12	159
3:13-14	159, 160
3:14	159
3:19	160
3:23	160
3:23-25	160
3:25	160
4:3-8	161
4:5	161
4:8	197
4:21-31	186

Philippians

1:7	116
-----	-----

Colossians

2:15	94
------	----

1 Thessalonians

1:9	197
1:11	201
1:17	119
2:11	201
2:18	191
2:19-20	116

Philemon

8	107
8-17	106
9	107
11	107
13	120
17	107
18	107

Hebrews

10:11	195
-------	-----

1 John

2:11 191

2 John

7 89

Revelation

21:11 164

21:29 164

f) Other Literature

1QH^a

7:30–33 165–66

11:33–35 166

Q

11:20 125

Memar Marqa

5.4 149–50

6.3 149–50

6

11 149–50, 172

Shepherd of Hermas

Visions

2:2 120

3:3–4:1 120

Index of Subjects

- Abraham 11, 56, 99, 159
Achaia 9, 19, 30, 31, 48, 49, 119
Alexander of Abonoteichus 63–72
Ambassador 2, 35, 176
Anaphora 134, 142
Anaphoric article 198
Antony 95, 108, 109–10
Apollon 55, 65, 188
Apostles,
 False 10–11, 53–55, 59–60, 60–65, 79, 210
 Rival 5, 11, 48, 52–65, 70, 79, 99, 210
 Super- 10–12, 13, 53–54, 57, 59–60, 79,
 61–65, 210
Argument,
 a maiore ad minus 131, 137, 139–40
 a minore ad maius 4, 16, 137–38, 139–41,
 143, 145, 146, 170–71, 212, 213
Asclepius 63
Asia Minor 43, 55, 155, 169

Babylonian Exile 129, 163–65
Boasting 7, 10–11, 37, 43, 56, 60–62, 73–75,
 105, 115
Brutus 107–112, 135

Charlatan 13, 15, 62, 71, 80, 89, 92, 114, 187, 211
Chiasm 165
Chloe 65, 70
Cicero 107–10, 112, 135, 140
Clement of Rome 44, 45
Collection, *See* Jerusalem,
 collection for
Commission,
 Moses' 99–100, 102, 132
 Paul's 2, 14, 35, 72, 78, 82, 102, 176, 201
 Titus' 82, 135
Covenant,
 new 16, 58, 69, 100, 126, 132–33, 136,
 138–39, 161, 174, 211–12
 old (original) 16, 100, 132, 138–39, 148,
 165, 168–69, 180, 185, 211–12
Crispus 70
Crucifixion of Christ 118, 160, 174, 206
Curse of the Law 159–60, 199

Cybele 95

Death and resurrection
 of Christ 15, 86, 95, 97, 122, 186, 189, 201,
 204–206, 209, 213
 in Paul's body 15, 86, 95, 97, 189
 believers' participation in 204–6, 209,
 213
Diogenes the Cynic 74, 199
Dionysus 95
Divine man (θεῖος ἀνὴρ) 56–58
Divine punishment 3, 13, 15, 89–92, 94, 95,
 136, 154, 157, 158, 162–70, 211, 214

Egypt 99, 155, 158, 186, 211
End (τέλος) 179
Envoy,
 Moses as 101, 102, 131, 173–78, 191, 208, 211
 Paul as 2, 6, 13, 52, 69, 72, 78, 85, 87, 99,
 100, 102, 114, 131, 132–35, 171, 174–77, 191,
 208, 211
Epictetus 199
Erastus 70
Exegetical comment 195, 196, 198–200, 201,
 209, 213

Fitness language (ἱκανός, ἱκανότης, ἱκανόω) 2,
 14, 16, 52, 69–72, 76, 85, 93–102, 121, 131, 132,
 135–36, 193, 211
Food sacrificed to idols (εἰδωλόθυτα) 25, 66,
 68, 123, 186
Fragrance (εὐωδία) 6, 94, 97, 188
Fraud 3, 13, 15, 36, 44, 63, 71–72, 76, 78–81,
 90–91
Freedom 62, 175, 198–200

Gaius 70
Gentiles 1, 14–15, 16, 17, 58, 59, 81–82, 126,
 130, 153, 154, 155–62, 166, 168–71, 173–74,
 178–79, 180, 197–99, 205, 207, 208–9, 212
Glossalalia 62, 75
Glory
 and punishment 154, 162–70
 of Christ 105, 190, 201

- of God 4, 15, 102, 144, 154, 162–66, 171, 172,
 201, 202
 of Paul's ministry 14, 102, 137–47, 170,
 171–72, 174, 202, 204–6, 212, 213–14
 of Moses' Ministry 4, 14, 577, 137–51,
 171–74, 193, 202, 204–6, 212, 213–14
 of the Lord 14, 15, 57, 84, 162–70, 173, 198,
 200–3, 204, 208, 209, 213, 214
 God of this age 16, 190–91, 193, 209

 Hardship catalogue 3, 37, 74, 77, 87–90, 175
 Homoioteleuton 134
 Hypocrisy 76, 78, 79, 176

 Idolatry 3, 24, 25, 59, 66, 123, 129, 130, 155,
 186
 Ignatius of Antioch 44, 45
 Incest, person accused of 12, 21, 26
 Integrity
 of 2 Corinthians 1, 6–9, 12–13, 18–51,
 210
 of Paul 2–3, 5, 13, 15, 52, 63, 74, 76–85, 87,
 89, 90–92, 93, 102, 111–15, 135, 174, 175,
 187, 209, 211
 Intertextual discourse 121–23, 129–30
 Isis 89, 95, 96, 117, 118–19
 Israel
 and the covenant 126, 132, 133, 169, 212
 as a negative model for the Corinthians
 15–16, 180–87, 192–93, 194, 197, 200, 207,
 208–9
 in the wilderness 3–5, 14, 57, 123, 144,
 146–50, 172–80, 191, 192–93, 208, 213
 veiled 17, 180–87, 192–93, 197, 200, 208,
 213

 James (brother of Jesus) 52
 Jerusalem,
 church of 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 16, 30, 53–54,
 81–85, 92, 105, 106, 111, 112, 210, 211
 city of 104, 155–56, 163–64
 collection for 7, 8, 9, 13, 16, 26, 28–31, 41,
 48, 81–85, 91–92, 93, 103, 105, 106, 110–12,
 114, 119, 120, 135, 175, 211
 meeting in 81–82, 106
 temple in 25, 155, 162–64
 Judaizing 1, 24, 53–56, 58, 124, 128–30, 199
 Julius Caesar 117

 Letter
 of Christ 15
 of recommendation 14, 16, 43, 53, 60–61,
 64, 74, 84, 93, 102–17, 120–36, 171, 174,
 192, 207, 210–12
 of tears (painful) 21–22, 26–28, 32, 40–41,
 43, 44, 47, 48, 49
 Letter-Spirit contrast 4, 14, 132–36, 137, 138,
 151, 168–70, 171, 211–12
 Lord (κύριος),
 as Christ 196, 198
 as God 196–98, 201, 206
 as Spirit 198–200
 Lord's Supper 67, 90–91, 186–87

 Macedonia 6–7, 8, 28, 33, 40, 84, 85, 92, 119
 Ministry (διακονία)
 of condemnation 4, 16, 138, 142, 143, 151,
 153, 162
 of death 4, 16, 54, 55, 57, 97, 137–71, 174,
 178, 199, 205, 212, 214
 of justification 4, 137–71
 of letter 14, 132, 137–38, 171, 212
 of Moses 4, 100, 121, 137–71, 173, 178
 of Paul 133, 137–71
 of Spirit 4, 14, 133, 137, 138, 143, 150, 151,
 169, 170, 171, 202, 05, 208, 211
 Moses,
 as text 14, 15, 17, 173, 180–87, 208, 209, 213
 as a model for believers 101, 173, 193–208,
 209
 as a veiled envoy 3–5, 14–15, 54, 57, 149,
 152, 172, 173–180, 181, 194, 208–9, 212–13
 unveiled reading of 122, 152, 185, 196

 Onesimus 106–7
 Openness (παρηγορία) 14, 35, 36, 77–78, 119,
 174–77, 193–94, 198, 208
 Oxymoron 138, 144–46

 Paranomasia 196–97
Passivum divinum 182–83, 193
 Perception, 136
 unveiled 5, 14–15, 187, 197–98, 200–1, 203,
 208, 209, 214
 veiled 5, 14–17, 122, 173, 181–92, 194, 196,
 208, 209
 Peregrinus Proteus 78

- Peter (Cephas) 66, 167
 Philemon 106–7
 Philistines 163–64
 Physiognomy 71, 87
 Pillars 53–54, 81–82, 106, 112, 210
 Pleonasm 179
 Polycarp 45
 Procession 16, 93–136, 162, 170

 Qumran 23–24, 165–66, 168

 Redactor 25, 38, 44, 93

 Satan 10, 16, 153, 184, 190–91, 193, 209
 Scent (ὀσμὴ) 6, 39, 94, 96–97, 135, 136
 Self-commendation 52, 64, 68, 69, 72–76, 87, 91, 93
 Serapis 95
 Sinai 1, 3, 15, 58, 101, 123–24, 137, 144, 147–50, 170–71, 174, 176, 177, 208
 Socrates 199
 Spirit-people 55–56
 Stephanus 70
 Super-apostles, *See* apostles, super-
 Synagogue 5, 58–59, 104, 184, 189

 Tent of Meeting 3–4, 15, 196, 197, 198, 201, 208, 209

 Tertullian 12
 Thinking process (νοήματα) 181–85, 190–93, 209
 Those who are perishing (οἱ ἀπολλύμενοι) 2, 6, 77, 94, 97, 98, 136, 187–92, 200, 213
 Those who are being saved (οἱ σωζόμενοι) 6, 94, 97, 98, 136, 189
 Timothy 21–22, 28, 42, 45, 176
 Titus (Paul's companion) 6–7, 8, 21–22, 27, 28, 30, 32, 35–41, 49–50, 51, 80, 82, 83, 105, 135
 Titus (Roman Emperor) 117, 118
 Transformation 14, 15–16, 118–20, 121, 129, 135–36, 170–171, 200–9, 212–14
 Troas 6, 28, 33, 39, 40

 Unbelievers (ἄπιστοι) 23, 25, 67, 190
 Unveiled face
 of Moses 3, 5, 14–15, 57, 173, 194, 201, 208, 209, 213
 of believers 5, 14, 15, 187, 194, 197, 200–9, 213, 214
 of “super-apostles” 57

 Vespasian 118

 Wrongdoer (ὁ ἀδικήσας) 11–12, 13, 29, 61, 85